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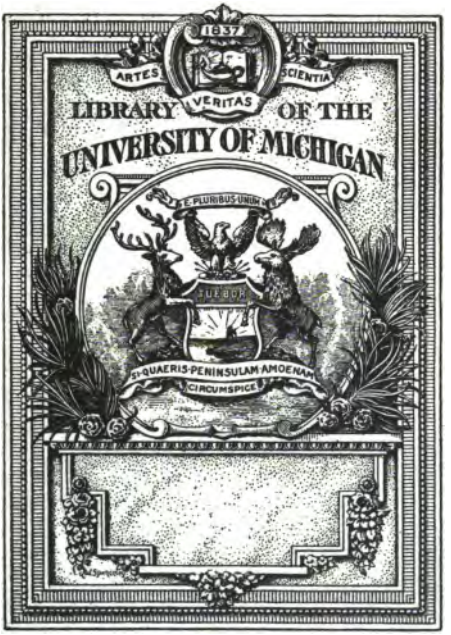
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A Novel.

BY

B. L. FARJEON,

AUTHOR OF

"GREAT PORTER SQUARE," "GRIF," "IN A SILVER SEA," "THE HOUSE OF WHITE SHADOWS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MISER FAREBROTHER.

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CHAPTER I.

A BAD BUSINESS.

At ten o'clock on this morning Captain Ablewhite, unannounced, and without knocking at the door, walked into Jeremiah's room in the hotel at which he had taken up his quarters. Jeremiah was still in bed. Closing the door carefully behind him and turning the key, Captain Ablewhite drew a chair to the side of the bed and sat down.

"This is a bad business," said Captain Ablewhite.

Jeremiah was in a parlous condition. His face was haggard; his eyes were bloodshot; he was shaking like a man in a palsy.

"This is a bad business," repeated Captain Ablewhite, "You are too much upset to reply. But why, oh, *why* have you lost your head?"

Jeremiah put his hand up, feebly and despairing'y, and passed it vacantly over his forehead.

"I have here," said Captain Ablewhite, plunging his hands into the pockets of his gorgeous dressing-gown, "a pick-me-up. It will pull you round, and then we can talk."

He produced two bottles—one containing the pick-me-up, the other soda. Taking a large tumbler from a table he poured a good dose of the pick-me-up into it, and then uncorked the soda, which he emptied into the glass.

"Drink this."

Jeremiah drank it, and almost instantly became for a while clear-brained.

"Better?" asked Captain Ablewhite.

"A great deal better," replied Jeremiah.

Then, for the third time, the jovial Captain—he was as fresh as a two-year-old—said, "This is a bad business."

And still, clear-headed as he now was, Jeremiah did not know what to say in answer to a very plain statement of fact.

"Let me see," said Captain Ablewhite, taking out his

pocket-book. "There is nothing like looking a difficulty straight in the face. It is not a bit of good shirking it. What you've got to do is to meet it—and, Mr. Jeremiah Pamflett, meet it you must. Now, then, for the facts. You brought down with you to Doncaster a very comfortable sum of ready money. How much?"

"Two thousand pounds," replied Jeremiah.

"That is right. Speak clearly and plainly. Two thousand pounds. If I had that in my pocket at the present moment, I would double it before the day is over. There's a race to be run—however, let that pass."

"What race?" cried Jeremiah. "Is it a certainty?"

"It is a certainty," said Captain Ablewhite, solemnly. "I've got the tip for the Scurry Stakes, my lad, and the horse can't lose."

"But why not give it to me?" asked Jeremiah, in great excitement. "I could make everything right—everything—everything....." His voice trailed off into a whimper.

"Why don't I give it to you?" said Captain Ablewhite, very calmly. "Because I am beginning to lose my opinion

of you. Let me tell you, though: you may justify it yet if you are not thoroughly white-livered."

"I will, I will!" exclaimed Jeremiah. "Only give me the tip—give me the tip!"

"Not if I know it. This little affair I will keep to myself, and I'll sweep the market. You've let too many good things slip by this week. Come, now, confess: if you had stuck to your 'system,' how much would you have won? Don't put me off. You've gone all through it, and you know the figures to the fraction of a shilling."

Jeremiah struck his forehead with his hand. "I should have won seven thousand pounds."

"Exactly. And you did not win it because you weren't game, and because you allowed yourself to be led away. What is the good of a man unless he has the courage of his opinions? Before midnight I'm going to try you; I'm going to see whether you're worth trying to save (because you are in a frightful hole, you know, and there's no telling what will happen to you if you continue to show the white feather), or whether I shall let you go to the dogs. It depends upon me, old chap. Oppose me, show ingratitude,

try to prove that you're cleverer than I am, and the odds are that you will have seven years—not less—perhaps fourteen. Oh, you are clever, you are! Make no mistake, you *are* clever; but you want nerve! Why, if you had been open with me—if you had told me honestly what your system was—we might both have made fortunes. But that's neither here nor there. Things are as they are, aren't they?"

"Yes, they are," sighed Jeremiah.

"Shall I go on?"

"Yes."

"Well, then. You brought down two thousand pounds with you, and you blued it. Eh?"

"Yes."

"I don't ask you where you got the money from. It is no business of mine, and I will have nothing to do with it. I have my ideas, but I'll keep them to myself. Having lost your two thousand pounds, you get me to introduce you to a book-maker, who took your bets in the expectation of paying you if you won, and receiving from you if you lost. And you did business with him in a false name."

"I didn't get you," protested Jeremiah; "you offered to introduce me; and it was at *your* suggestion I used the name of Farebrother."

Captain Ablewhite rose and said, "Good-morning."

"No, no," cried Jeremiah, piteously; "don't desert me!"

"Did I introduce you, or did you ask me to introduce you?" demanded Captain Ablewhite.

"I asked you—I asked you!" whined Jeremiah.

"And did you use Farebrother's name upon my suggestion? Be careful, old chap."

"At my own suggestion," faltered Jeremiah.

"Good," said Captain Ablewhite, resuming his seat. "You made bets with him, and you are in his books over three thousand pounds. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"I have I O U's for another two thousand pounds. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"It is a satisfaction. You hold acceptances of mine for close on that amount, and the entire amount of cash I have received from you is about one-fourth of that amount."

"Business is business," groaned Jeremiah.

"All right. I didn't complain, and I don't. You and I are pretty well squared on that account. Taking it altogether, you have lost this week some seven thousand pounds, when you might have won as much."

"Oh, Lord!" gasped Jeremiah.

"You may clasp your head till you're blue in the face, and *that* won't get you out of the hole. Do you want to get out of it?"

"Yes; of course I do."

"Then," said Captain Ablewhite, enigmatically, "take the 1.33 train to London. You will get there at five o'clock. Have a bath and a sensible dinner, and meet me outside the Langham Hotel, on the opposite side of the road, at nine o'clock to-night. It may be in my power to save you. No words. If you do not obey me I have done with you. Yes or no?"

"Yes," said Jeremiah.

CHAPTER II.

THE DIAMOND BRACELET.

THIS was to be a night of surprising adventure to Jeremiah. He was punctual to time. As the church clock struck the hour of nine he arrived at the Langham Hotel, and in accordance with Captain Ablewhite's instructions, waited on the opposite side of the road. There was no moon, and he paced the flag-stones in shadow. A quarter past nine, half-past, three-quarters past, then the chiming of ten o'clock, and still no Captain. Jeremiah was in a bewilderment of agonized suspense; he was on the brink of a precipice, and he relied upon Captain Ablewhite to save him—by what means he knew not, but he depended upon the Captain's word. "He is detained," thought Jeremiah; "the train is late; he is not a punctual man; perhaps he said ten o'clock instead of nine. At all events, I'll wait for him." The minutes sped on; a quarter past

ten, half past, three-quarters past, and now another hour had passed. It was eleven o'clock, and Jeremiah, worked up into a state of terrible excitement, continued to pace up and down, up and down. Two or three times a policeman, attracted by his monotonous movements, strolled past, and carelessly looked at him; and on these occasions Jeremiah strove to hide his face from the policeman's scrutiny. "Will he never come?" thought Jeremiah—"will he never come?" At half-past eleven a singular incident occurred. A voice at his back accosted him. It was a woman's voice.

"Don't turn," the woman said. "Your name is Pamflett?"

"Yes," answered Jeremiah, much amazed.

"You are waiting for some one?"

"Yes."

"For whom?"

"Captain Ablewhite."

"That is right. Take this."

The woman slipped a packet into his hand and was gone. Jeremiah, turning, saw no trace of her. No time was

afforded him for reflection. The Captain's voice struck upon his ear.

"Follow me," it said.

Without the evidence of the voice Jeremiah would not have recognized Captain Ablewhite, who was enveloped in a large Inverness cape, and upon whose head was a hat unlike that which he usually wore. He followed the Captain, who walked very fast, until they reached a narrow street at some distance from the Langham. It was a thoroughfare which appeared to be quite deserted.

"Well, old fellow?" said Captain Ablewhite.

"Well?" responded the mystified Jeremiah.

"Couldn't help being late. Knew you would wait for me. Ah! you have the packet, I see."

"This?" said Jeremiah.

"Yes, this;" and Captain Ablewhite took it from his hands.

"It was given to me by a woman, who hid herself from me. What is the meaning of it?"

"You will know soon enough. Go and fetch a four-wheeler"

Jeremiah departed, and returned with the conveyance.

"Give the driver this half-sovereign," whispered Captain Ablewhite. "Tell him it is on account, and that he has a good fare. Instruct him to drive along the Finchley road. No questions, old chap; do as I bid you."

Jeremiah followed out the instructions, and the next moment he and Captain Ablewhite were in the cab.

"No place like a four-wheeler," said the Captain, "for an interchange of confidences. Give me your closest attention, friend Jeremiah. You're in luck's way. Being in one of those awkward fixes which invariably land a fellow in jail and ruin him for ever and ever, amen! something has turned up to save you. This is the way of it—but before I go into the matter you are to understand that you are to make no inquiries. What I choose to impart I will impart —nothing more. Do you agree?"

"Yes."

"To proceed, then. A lady friend of mine—call her a Duchess—has pressing need for a large sum of money, and has only one means of raising it. The amount she requires is four thousand pounds, and she has handed you jewels

worth ten times as much. In a month from this date the four thousand will be repaid with interest, and the jewels will be handed back to her. They are in this packet. Seeing's believing; you shall see them."

He unfastened the packet, and took a morocco case from the wrapper. Then he produced a box of wax tapers, which he gave to Jeremiah, bidding him to keep up a light, in order that he might have a good view of the jewels. He nicked the morocco case open, and exposed to view a bracelet of diamonds of such extraordinary size that Jeremiah could not help giving utterance to an exclamation of astonishment.

"You may well cry out," said Captain Ablewhite. "The stones, if they're worth a penny, are worth fifty thousand pounds. Do you wish to know how I became associated with the affair? Well, I've no objection to tell you. The fact is, the Duchess is an old flame of mine. An antique Duke falling in love with her, and being in his dotage, I naturally consent to the marriage. But she is an awfully extravagant woman, and needing instantly the sum of money I mentioned, comes to me. 'I have a friend,' I

say to her, 'in the money-lending way, who, if you give him security, will obtain millions for you.' Whereupon she says she will leave her wonderful diamond bracelet with my friend until she pays back the four thousand with ample interest. That will be your profit, Jeremiah. She dare not pledge these diamonds in the regular way with the men who deal regularly in such affairs. It would come to her husband's ears; and although the diamonds are hers, to do as she likes with, there is the future to be considered. The Duke makes her a handsome allowance; he has drawn up his will, leaving her as much as it is in his power to do; he is a very jealous, irascible, pompous-headed old idiot, and it is therefore imperative that this little matter shall be negotiated in such a way as to render it impossible it can come to his knowledge. He brings his wife to London this evening; his town mansion is not in a fit state to receive his noble carcass, so his wife drives him to the Langham. She knows from me that a friend—you, Jeremiah—is waiting outside the hotel; she comes to you, addresses you, slips her bracelet into your hand, and vanishes. What confidence! What imprudence! Dear

little soul! As for the interest, charge her sixty, eighty, a hundred per cent. Yes, charge her a hundred. It won't come out of her pocket, it will come out of the Duke's. 'But,' say you, '*I* haven't the money to advance; I'm clean stumped.' That need not stop the cart, friend Jeremiah. What you have to do is to go to your governor, Farebrother, and show him these diamonds. If the sight of them doesn't set his thin blood in a glow, nothing will. You say to him, 'The lady requires *six* thousand pounds on them for a month. She will give one thousand pounds interest.' That is at the rate of two hundred per cent. per annum, friend Jeremiah. You continue: 'If the money is not repaid at the end of the month, the diamonds are yours; they become forfeited. Here is a letter from her to that effect.' I will give it to you presently, Jeremiah, and you can hand it to the governor. He won't be able to resist the bait. How about the ready? Can he lay hands on it?"

"He has bonds that he can sell," replied Jeremiah.

"Good. You can manage that for him. Now, how do *you* benefit by the transaction? First and foremost, you

get six thousand pounds from the governor; you hand me four and keep two. From what you let drop, friend Jeremiah, you need some such sum of ready money to replace the cash you lost at Doncaster. Well, there you have it, and you will be spared acquaintance with the criminal court. In a month you will receive four thousand pounds interest on the loan, of which you hand the governor one thousand, retaining three, which you pay to me off what you owe the book-maker. To oblige me, he will wait. The personal accounts between you and me we will go into by-and-by. You see, friend Jeremiah, something very disagreeable, shockingly disagreeable, stares you in the face, and this is the only way out of it. I shall expect you to show your gratitude. That such a slice of luck should fall to you just in the nick of time is nothing less than miraculous. Now, then, how does the thing strike you? Farebrother will lend the money, won't he? If he doesn't, or if you have any doubt of it, I can take the diamonds somewhere else."

"I don't think," said Jeremiah, slowly, "that there is any doubt he will lend the money."

"Very well, then. Carry it through, and keep it dark. See the governor to-morrow and arrange it. You'll do it?"

"Yes."

"There's nothing more to say, then. Just see the confidence I have in you, leaving you this treasure without so much as a receipt for it. But I know you can be trusted just now, because of the fix you're in. I must see you to-morrow night to hear what you have to tell. Best not to meet at my place or yours till this little matter is concluded. Say at ten o'clock, just outside Whitechapel Church."

"You will be punctual?" said Jeremiah.

"Oh yes," said Captain Ablewhite, laughing; "I will be punctual. Ta-ta! Call to the driver to stop."

He jumped from the cab as the driver was pulling up, leaving Jeremiah to make his way back to London alone.

On the following night, at ten o'clock, they met outside Whitechapel Church, and Jeremiah informed Captain Ablewhite that Miser Farebrother had consented to lend the money. On Tuesday evening Captain Ablewhite received four thousand pounds from Jeremiah, and the gallant

Captain walked off with a very peculiar smile on his face. A few hours afterward he was whirling away in the night train to Dover, bound for Italy.

CHAPTER III.

SISTER AND BROTHER.

For a fortnight after Phœbe reached the haven of love in Camden Town she lay between life and death. It was only when she felt herself out of danger that her strength gave way. The strain of the last few months in Parksides produced a dangerous illness, and for many days her life was despaired of. How tenderly was she nursed! What treasures of love surrounded her! She was not left alone a minute by day and night. Now it was Aunt Leth who watched by her bedside, now it was Fanny, now it was Uncle Leth. In some dim way she was conscious of this spiritual comfort, and it helped her recovery. On the twelfth day the doctors proclaimed her to be out of danger.

The Lethbridges could ill afford the expenses of her sickness. There was the regular family doctor to be paid;

there were the fees of the celebrated physician who was called in, and who came in a carriage and pair with two footmen; there were the prescribed delicacies to be provided for. It was all done cheerfully and with full-hearted affection. Sacrifices were made; money was raised upon such small articles of jewelry as they possessed, even Uncle Leth's old-fashioned watch went, and not a murmur passed their lips, not a regretful thought at the loss of these treasures crossed their minds. They had but one hope, but one desire—that they might succeed in saving their beloved girl. It was granted them, and she sat in a dressing-gown in the dear little parlour, the very walls of which were sanctified in her eyes.

They did not dare to speak to her of her father, nor did she refer to him; but it needed no words from her to make them understand the cruel torture and oppression which, prolonged for a few weeks longer, would have brought death or madness to her. When she was convalescent her actions were pitiful: she clung to her friends; her hands were for ever seeking theirs; her eyes constantly travelled to the dear ones who were ministering to her, and whose

eyes never rested on her pale face without a tender, cheery smile.

Fred Cornwall came daily, morning and evening, with flowers and jellies and things which it was not possible for her to eat. He had not been allowed to see her yet; but he always left his constant love for his dear girl, and messages which it would have occupied an hour to deliver. When Phœbe was sensible and strong enough, these messages, in a reasonable form, were conveyed to her, and her relatives were surprised at the grave pleasure with which she received them. The heavenly delight which fills a young girl's heart when, in a time of bitter trouble, she is assured that her lover is true to her was not expressed in her face. Pleasure she felt; but it was a thoughtful pleasure in which there seemed to be an element of pain.

"He is true to you! he is true to you!" whispered Fanny to her. "Oh! you should see him, Phœbe. Except my dear father, there is not a better man in the whole wide world."

"I am sure," said Phœbe, quietly, "that Mr. Cornwall is a good man, and my earnest hope is that he will be happy."

"Phœbe!"

"Yes, dear."

"Not *Mr.* Cornwall—Fred—your own dear Fred!" Phœbe did not reply, and Fanny continued: "He is certain to be happy, with you!"

And still Phœbe made no reply. Fanny was greatly disturbed, and she told her mother privately that she was convinced there was something on Phœbe's mind with respect to Fred.

"Do not worry her or argue with her," Aunt Leth said. "Remember the sufferings she has endured, and leave it to herself to confide in us. Time will bring happiness to her bruised heart."

"Ask her to see Fred, mamma."

"She will see him this evening, my dear; she told me so; and I have written a note to him desiring him to come early."

"Then everything will be right," said Fanny. "Mamma, is it not strange that we do not hear from her father? He must know that Phœbe is with us."

"He does know, Fanny. I wrote to him, but I have not received a reply."

"I am glad of it. Phœbe is now entirely ours, and will live with us all her life—that is, till she marries Fred."

Fred Cornwall arrived early in the afternoon, and Aunt Leth opened the door for him.

"She will see me, Aunt Leth?" he said, eagerly.

"Yes, Fred. She wishes to see you alone. You must be very gentle and quiet with her."

"Indeed I will be that. Here is some jelly, the kind she likes best."

"Thank you, Fred. Wait a moment in the dining-room. Fanny is with her, and I must call her away."

Presently Fred Cornwall entered the room in which Phœbe was sitting. She looked at him gratefully and tenderly; an angelic spirit of resolution was depicted in her face.

"Phœbe, my darling Phœbe!" he murmured, as he sat by her side and took her hand; and then he was overcome by her delicate, fragile appearance, and it was as much as he could do to prevent the tears running down his face.

She gently disengaged her hand.

"Why do you take your hand away, Phœbe? Let me hold it. Give it to me of your own free-will."

"No, Mr. Cornwall," she said, in a low, sweet tone. "I cannot—I must not."

Again "Mr. Cornwall"! He looked at her reproachfully.

"Do you no longer love me, Phœbe, that you are so changed toward me?"

She was compelled to pause before she could answer him.

"You must not ask me to reply to that question," she then said—"for pity's sake!"

"I *must* ask you," he said, impetuously. "Oh, I beg your pardon, Phœbe! Aunt Leth enjoined upon me to be gentle with you, and here am I forgetting! But Phœbe, dear Phœbe, *my* Phœbe—consider! I implore you to consider! You gave me your heart, as I have given you mine. Have I done anything to forfeit your love?"

"Nothing," she said.

"Why, then, are you so strange to me? Why have you altered so?"

"I am not altered to you," she said.

"Then you love me still!" he cried.

"Will you listen to me?" she asked, "I have been trying to strengthen myself for this meeting, and you must not weaken me. No; do not kiss me! There is something that *must* be told—that you *must* hear!"

"I will listen to you, my darling—mine, and no other man's. You do not love another, Phœbe?"

"No, Fred." She was not aware that she had uttered the dear name.

"I am happy," he said. "Go on, my dear."

Then she told him of the oath her father had extracted from her that she would not marry without his consent, and said that, with that oath upon her conscience, she could not expect Fred to be bound to her.

"To receive you as my lover," she said, "would be, to my mind, as if I am spiritually breaking the oath I have sworn. It would make me feel guilty; it would lower me in my own esteem; it would be playing with my conscience."

"When you took the oath, Phœbe," said Fred Cornwall, immensely relieved, but at the same time perplexed, by the revelation, "you were not aware what you were binding yourself to?"

"I was not aware of it," she said. "My father spoke so kindly to me, and seemed to regard you with such favour, that I thought he intended to sanction our engagement. But he may not have known what was in my mind, as assuredly I did not know what was in his. It is not for me to say, and you must not press me. I am striving to do what is right. Help me to do it! I am bound by my oath. Without my father's consent I cannot marry you; he will never give it, and while he lives we can be nothing to each other. I have thought of it—oh, so seriously!—and I have decided in what I believe to be the right way. If in the future I am ever in your mind, I wish you to think of me with respect."

"Through all the future that is before me," said Fred, "you will be ever in my mind, and I shall ever think of you with respect. If my love needed strengthening, what you have said would strengthen it; but it can never be stronger, more devoted, more complete than it is; nothing can make it so; and nothing can weaken it. 'Give me your hand, Phœbe.'" She looked at him pleadingly. "Give me your hand, Phœbe." She gave it to him. "I

swear to you solemnly, on my honour as a man, on my faith as a Christian, that I will never marry another woman. May misfortune pursue and overtake me quickly if I ever prove false to the love I have given you! Have you anything to say to me, Phœbe?"

She understood him. He had given her a solemn pledge. He had a right to a similar pledge from her.

"If I do not marry you," she said, "I will never marry. Though we may be parted for life, I will be true to the love I have given you. And now"—she held out her arms imploringly—"strengthen me, Fred!"

He rose, and stood apart from her, with his face averted. Presently he resumed his seat by her side.

"Until a happier day arrives," he said, taking her unresisting hand, "we will not meet as lovers. We are brother and sister. Kiss me, Phœbe."

She kissed him, and he kissed her. Thus the faithful compact was made.

Before the week was at an end, Fred wrote the following letter to Miser Farebrother:

"SIR,—Your daughter has told me of the oath she took that she will never marry without your consent. She feels herself bound by this oath, and will adhere to it. Thus, while you live, a life of unhappiness is before her, if you refuse to give your consent to our union. She loves me, and I love her with a most perfect love. We have pledged ourselves anew to each other, but are both clear upon the point that we cannot be wed without your sanction. I ask, I implore, you to give it. I am not a rich man; but I have a good position and the prospect of a prosperous future is before me. My family is a family of standing, and is honoured and respected. If you will permit me, I will send you credentials of my character, with which you cannot fail to be satisfied. Into my union with your daughter the question of money does not enter. We shall be satisfied to work our way without help from you in a money shape, either now or hereafter. To this I am prepared to bind myself by written document; and all that a man can do to make the woman he loves happy, that I will do to the utmost extent of my power. Respectfully and humbly, I beg of you to release your daughter from her oath, and to

bestow upon her a happiness for which she and I will be ever grateful. I remain, sir, faithfully and obediently yours,

"FREDERICK CORNWALL."

The letter was despatched, and day after day Fred looked eagerly for an answer to it. But none came.

There arrived, however, at Aunt Leth's house a paper for Phœbe, in her father's writing. It was not signed, nor was she addressed in it by name. This was its purport:

"I have received from a certain Mr. Frederick Cornwall a letter in which he asks me to release you from a solemn oath you voluntarily took, and to give my consent to your marriage with him. This I will never do, nor will I ever release you from your oath. In that oath was comprised a daughter's duty to her father—a duty you have wilfully and systematically neglected and failed to perform. Your guilty desires can only be accomplished by my death. When you are prepared to obey me in the one wish of my life, you can come to me—not until then."

CHAPTER IV.

JEREMIAH IN TRIBULATION.

JEREMIAH PAMFLETT, owing the book-maker with whom he made his bets at Doncaster over three thousand pounds, very soon made the disagreeable discovery that Captain Ablewhite had played him false. He had made no arrangement with the book-maker to give Jeremiah time to settle, and Jeremiah himself personally was compelled to arrange with the man to whom he owed so large an amount of money. He found it no easy task. The book-maker bullied and blustered and threatened exposure, and the result was that Jeremiah had to part not only with acceptances of his own by which he was bound to pay sums at stated periods, but also with all the securities he held on his own account from persons with whom he had had private business. Among these acceptances was Mr. Lethbridge's for three hundred pounds, which Jeremiah had dis-

counted for Kiss and the dramatic author, and which in a very short time would be due.

The terror of this acceptance weighed most heavily upon Uncle Leth. As the day approached upon which it was necessary it should be paid, his fears increased to an almost unbearable pitch. He had written to Jeremiah Pamflett asking for renewal, and the answer he received was to the effect that the acceptance was in the hands of another person, and that it would have to be paid on the day of maturity. The reason of Uncle Leth writing this letter to Jeremiah was that in interviews with Kiss and Mr. Linton they mournfully declared their inability to raise the smallest sum to help Uncle Leth in his difficulty. They were overwhelmed with self-reproaches, but this did not help Uncle Leth in his difficulty, nor stave off impending ruin. Uncle Leth had succeeded in discovering the name of the man who held the bill; he had appealed to him in vain for renewal. "The acceptance will have to be met," said the book-maker. "If it is not, I shall sell you up. I have ascertained that you hold a responsible position in a bank. Ask

the manager to advance you the money if you happen to be short yourself."

To ask the bank manager to assist him in paying an acceptance held by a racing man would be to ask for his dismissal. It would be tantamount to a confession that he had been indulging in that worst of vices—betting on horses.

Uncle Leth had confided to his wife, and she, although she strove to comfort him, was terrified at the prospect. She had thought of Fred Cornwall, but she knew, from the young man's own indirect admissions, that he was not in a position to assist them. He knew nothing of the acceptance, and therefore could make no reference to it in his confidences with Aunt Leth. "It is an uphill fight," he had said cheerfully to her; "but I shall come out a victor in the end. At present, dear Aunt Leth, it is a tight fit." After this how could she make an appeal to him to help them out of their trouble? Meanwhile the day was approaching nearer and nearer.

It was Tuesday. On Wednesday, the following day, the acceptance was due, and Uncle Leth would have to meet it

or go to the wall. The dear old home would be sold up, and they would be turned into the streets. The tears that ran down Aunt Leth's face were like tears of blood from her heart.

On this Tuesday it was that consternation seized upon Jeremiah Pamflett, and furious anger raged in Miser Farebrother's heart. The cause of these emotions was a newspaper article, which is here transcribed. It was headed:

"A STRANGE AFFAIR—THE BITERS BIT."

"A singular discovery has just come to light, and is in the hands of the police. Everybody is acquainted with the name of the wealthy miner from California, Mr. Quinlan, whose income is said to be not less than half a million a year. His name and his doings have been for a long time past in everybody's mouth. He is of humble origin, and his eccentricities may be accounted for by the fact of his having come into a marvellous fortune, the spending of the income of which would be a tax upon the ablest man in creation. It may be remembered that his wife died a

couple of years since, and that last year he contracted a second marriage with an indifferent actress, whose extravagances in her new position have drawn attention to her in every city she and her husband have visited. The finest horses, the finest equipages, the finest dresses, the finest diamonds, the finest everything, in short, that cost vast sums of money. There came to the ears of Mrs. Quinlan and her too-generous husband that a diamond bracelet of rare—nay, of fabulous—value was in the market. The stones were of a monstrous size and of the purest colour. The price asked for this bracelet was no less than sixty thousand pounds. The stones alone, if sold singly, were valued by experts at considerably more than thirty thousand. To obtain possession of an ornament so rare and costly was a natural desire on the part of Mrs. Quinlan, and to her husband was a bagatelle. What are sixty thousand pounds to a man upon whom money continues to roll in a manner so bewildering? The upshot of the negotiations was that the bracelet was purchased and paid for, and Mrs. Quinlan the happy possessor.

"About four weeks ago Mr. and Mrs. Quinlan, with

their retinue and treasures, arrived at the Langham Hotel, with the intention of stopping there for two or three days. But fate willed it otherwise. Mrs. Quinlan was taken ill, and was confined to her bed. So serious was her illness that she was a prisoner in her bedroom for more than three weeks. Mr. Quinlan did not remain in attendance upon her the whole of this time. He had business which took him frequently to Paris and other places; consequently, for a greater part of the time during which his wife was suffering, he was an absentee.

"Among Mrs. Quinlan's serving-women was one of great attractions, and who was a special favourite with her mistress. This young woman's name is Alice Frost. She had the entire confidence of her mistress, and, as events have proved, was unworthy of it. To her was intrusted, during Mrs. Quinlan's sickness, the charge of the lady's jewels, which were kept in a very substantial safe in Mrs. Quinlan's bedroom. It was often impressed upon Mrs. Quinlan that she was imprudent to carry so much valuable property about with her; but she disregarded these hints, and took her pleasures in her own way. One of these

pleasures, in the course of her illness, was to have all her jewels and ornaments spread out before her on her bed, and to handle and gaze upon them. We hold that she was sensible in this, for what is the use of buried treasure? The servant who took these priceless gems from the safe for the inspection of her mistress was Alice Frost.

"Suddenly Alice Frost disappears. She is not discharged, she is not sick, she is not in disgrace; she simply disappears. Mrs. Quinlan, much distressed at the loss of so great a favourite, calls in a private detective. He listens to all that Mrs. Quinlan can impart to him, and when she has finished, remarks, 'She has run away.'

"'Impossible,' says Mrs. Quinlan. 'Why should she run away? Somebody has carried her off. She is very good-looking.'

"Says the detective, 'She had charge of your jewellery?'

"'To some extent,' says Mrs. Quinlan. 'But it is all kept in the safe there.'

"'Would you have any objection to our looking through it,' says the detective, 'and seeing that nothing is missing?'

"'No objection whatever,' says Mrs. Quinlan.

"Whereupon the safe is unlocked, and the treasures laid forth. With one exception it is all correct. Nothing is missing but the wonderful diamond bracelet. That is gone.

"'It accounts,' remarked the detective, 'for the disappearance of Alice Frost.'

"Mrs. Quinlan fell back speechless, and, when she recovered, bade the detective track Alice Frost and the sixty-thousand-pound bracelet.

"What has been discovered is this: Alice Frost disappeared one Friday night. Presumably the diamond bracelet also disappeared at the same time.

"What occurred in or about the Langham Hotel on that night which may afford a clue to the discovery of the robber or robbers?

"On that night the policeman on duty observed a man walking on the opposite side of the road for a space of a couple of hours. This man did nothing but walk slowly up and down, keeping as much as possible in the dark, and looking for some person he was waiting for. The police-

man on duty passed him on three occasions, and although the man endeavoured to avoid him, he obtained a good view of his features. He will be able to recognize the man.

"At half past eleven a woman came out of the Langham, and went over to the man. The policeman on duty saw this movement, but is not sure that he will be able to identify the woman. Of the man he *is* sure.

"The woman spoke to the man behind his back. The man did not turn his face. She slipped a parcel into his hands, and walked rapidly away. Almost immediately the man was joined by another in an Inverness cape, and the two walked away together. The policeman on duty saw nothing more of them. From the manner in which they walked away together there is no doubt that they were intimately acquainted with each other, and that they were confederates. So far, the policeman; now for the next evidence.

"As near as the cabman can remember, driver of a four-wheeler, it was within a few minutes of midnight that a man hailed him and bade him come along. They went a couple of hundred yards and took up a man in an Inverness

cape. The man who hailed the driver gave him half a sovereign 'on account,' and directed him to drive along the Finchley Road. He did so, and observed while he was driving that the men inside the cab were lighting matches, which proves that they were examining something—probably the diamond bracelet. After driving about an hour he was called upon to stop, and before he had pulled up his horse the man in the Inverness cape jumped out of the cab and disappeared. Then he was directed to drive back to London, and he did so, stopping, by orders, in Portland Place. The man who hailed him first (now the only one remaining in the cab) alighted, and the cabman noticed that he had a parcel in his hand. Again the diamond bracelet. The cabman asked for a few shillings more, reminding his fare that the half-sovereign given to him was 'on account.' The man said that he was well paid, and refused to part with anything further. The cabman began to argue with him, but the man did not stop; he ran off. The cabman's description of his fare tallies with that of the policeman on duty at the Langham Hotel. The cabman will be able to identify him.

"In some way which we are not at liberty to divulge, but in which we may say the good-looking Alice Frost is concerned, the disappearance of a blackleg going by the name of Captain Ablewhite bears upon the robbery. It is known that this Captain Ablewhite took the night train on the following Tuesday to Dover. Nothing further is at present discovered of him.

"Now comes the piquant feature in the robbery.

"To Mr. Quinlan, who arrived at the Langham Hotel after the discovery of the robbery, the detective narrated all the particulars of the affair. Mr. Quinlan laughed. His wife asked him what he was laughing at.

"'My dear,' he said to her, 'the loss is not so great as you suppose. Your diamond bracelet is safe.'

"'Safe!' she cried.

"'Here it is.' He pulled it from his pocket. 'The fact is, you would not be persuaded that it was imprudent to travel with so much valuable property about you, and I therefore took the precaution of having a bracelet made exactly like this. *All the stones in the bracelet that is stolen are false!*'

"An agreeable contemplation for the robbers. The biters are bit.

"The affair is in the hands of the detectives in Scotland Yard, who are confident that they will be able to track the robbers."

This newspaper article it was that struck consternation to the heart of Jeremiah Pamflett. He turned hot and cold. First he was clammy; the next moment he broke out into a hot perspiration. He had been swindled, tricked, betrayed; he, the wretched, depraved thief, had fallen amongst thieves. He, the sharper, had been sharped. Truly, the biter was bit!

What should he do? How was he to act in order to insure his safety? The policeman who had been on duty at the Langham Hotel on that Friday night said that he could identify him. The cabman he had engaged said the same. If he had had a sufficient sum of money he would have flown the country, but he had been compelled on that day to make a payment to the book-maker who held his acceptances for his losses at Doncaster, and he had not

enough left to pay his fare to the Continent. And what would be the use of his going there if he had? He could not live without money; he did not understand a word of any other language than English; and he would be sure to be tracked and brought back. His flight would make it worse for him; it would be an admission of guilt. Should he stop and brave it out? Upon reflection he gained a little courage. He argued with himself, despite the policeman's and the cabman's declarations that they could identify him, that it was scarcely possible they could do so unless he betrayed himself. He had been at great trouble to conceal his features from the policeman's scrutiny, and it only required him to put a good face on the matter to brazen it out; to so confuse the man, even if he came into contact with him, that he would pass unnoticed. But there was no occasion for him to come into contact with the policeman. He would keep out of the way, and the affair would blow over. Captain Ablewhite would not, could not, come back. The mere thought of Captain Ablewhite roused him to fury. He looked blindly round for something to strangle. If the bland, smiling Captain were before

him now! If he could meet him in some dark place! All surrounding objects seemed to be swimming in blood.

He ran into his bedroom, and filling the wash-hand basin with cold water, plunged his head into it. The action recalled him to his calmer self. Notwithstanding which, he said aloud, with a cunning smile, "I may find you one day, my Captain, and then, and then!" He clenched his hand and opened it, and twined his fingers, as though he had them on Captain Ablewhite's throat.

But there was no telling whether he was in danger or not. What it was imperatively necessary he should get possession of at once was money, in order to be prepared. Where could he get it from? Ah, his mother!

He would go down to Parksides immediately. Perhaps he might find Miser Farebrother's hidden treasure.

He emerged into the streets. As he descended the stairs he saw before him a vision of blood. Two men struggled for life and death. The house was very quiet. Only he and the *other man* occupied space. He tore at the Shadow's throat, he took a knife from his pocket, he plunged it in—

Blood, blood everywhere! Above him, beneath him, around him. Again and again the knife descended. What a delight to punish an enemy so! You tricked me, you robbed me, you laid snares for me! Take that—and that —and that!

He laughed aloud before he went into the street, and then he put on a smug face.

There were a number of persons walking this way and that, but not one took the slightest notice of him. He nodded to a passing acquaintance, who nodded back at him, and smiled. He was safe. What cause was there for fear?

In the sunlight the vision of blood vanished. He was face to face with the world, and his native cunning asserted itself.

Then he thought he was going down to Parksides to see his mother. He would have to see Miser Farebrother. He must have some excuse for the visit. He retraced his steps and went back to the office, arming himself with account-books, which he took up indiscriminately and made into a parcel, tying it up with string——

The string was red! Miser Farebrother's offices were

very gloomy; the windows had been frosted, so that no person should see through; a strange silence prevailed.

As he tied the books together with the string, a streak of blood appeared, stretched itself along the table, and dropped, drip by drip, on the floor. Jeremiah held himself in suspense to listen to the spiritual sound which his mood had brought to his ears. Drip, drip, drip!

Captain Ablewhite's blood. The policeman's blood. The cabman's blood. The blood of any person who was his enemy.

Yes, he would crush the life out of them. Like this, like this, like this! He ground his foot into the floor, and looked down, smiling. Then, locking the doors and putting the keys into his pocket, he descended the stairs.

He walked slowly to the street landing. There were not many stairs; but all the way down he was engaged in the life and death struggle, and all the space around was bathed in blood. A ruthless ferocity was awakened within him. His safety, his liberty, his very life was at stake. What mattered all else? "Every man for himself, and—"

He paused at the next word, "God," against which he mentally strove, and conquering it, cast a defiant look at the pulsing, bloody shadows which encompassed him, and threw the street door open.

Once more in the sunlight—and safe! That was the great point. And safe! He called a cab, a four-wheeler, and looked the driver straight in the face; then laughed, and directed the man to drive him to the railway station.

CHAPTER V.

MISER FAREBROTHER THREATENS JEREMIAH.

He usually travelled third-class to Beddington, but on this occasion he took a first-class ticket. To this piece of extravagance he was impelled by two reasons. He wished to be alone, and the first-class carriages were nearly always empty at this time of the day. Then, in the position in which he found himself—brought about partly by his own folly, but chiefly by the treachery of Captain Ablewhite—it mattered little how much he spent. What were pounds, shillings, and pence in comparison with his safety? He had worked himself into the belief that not only his liberty, but his life, was in peril.

The three first-class carriages in the train were unoccupied, and he got into one, and closed the door. No other passenger entered the carriage, and he travelled to Parksides alone.

He read again the newspaper article upon the diamond bracelet, and his feelings became more bitter and revengeful. The visions which had haunted him in Miser Farebrother's office reappeared. The words he was reading were printed in letters of blood; his eyes became blurred, and he wiped them with his handkerchief. The blood-shadows were on the handkerchief as he looked at it; the stains spread to his hands, as though they had just been employed upon a ruthless deed; the compartment in which he sat was throbbing with a silent life and death struggle, from which he emerged triumphant and free.

He was aroused by the stopping of the train at Beddington. He jumped out, with the account-books in his hands, and gazed defiantly around. No one challenged or accosted him, and he walked through the village toward Parksides. He heard a voice calling to him:

"Jeremiah! Jeremiah!"

The currents of his blood seemed to be suddenly arrested. Was he so soon discovered? Were they after him already?

"Jeremiah! Jeremiah!"

His mother, panting, laid her hand upon his shoulder.

He shook her off violently, and was about to fly when he recognized her.

"How fast you walk, Jeremiah!" He glared at her, and raised his hand with the intention of striking her, but she caught his arm and prevented him.

"Well, then!" he said, suddenly. "What do you come running after a fellow like that for? Just as if—" He did not finish the sentence.

"Just as if what, Jeremiah?" asked Mrs. Pamflett.

"Ask no questions and you'll hear no lies," he replied. "How is it that you're here instead of at Parksides?"

"Miser Farebrother sent me with a message to the telegraph office."

"A telegram!" he cried, all his fears reviving. "To whom?"

"To you, telling you to come here without a moment's delay."

"Oh, the old thief wants me?"

"He wants you badly, Jeremiah!"

"Does he? Was there nothing else in the telegram except that I was to come here without a moment's delay?"

"You were to bring the account-books."

"I have them, you see. Was the old thief in a good humour?"

"Jeremiah, I was listening outside his room, and I heard him limping up and down, muttering to himself. I didn't catch what he was saying, but he was in a desperate temper. Yet when he rang his bell, and I answered it, he was sitting at the writing-table, with the sweetest smile on his face, and his voice was like honey. 'Take this to the telegraph office,' he said, giving me the message; and he asked me how you were getting on, and whether you were saving money, and whether I had saved any. I told him I had a little—"

"How much?" asked Jeremiah, interrupting her.

"I didn't tell him that, Jeremiah."

"Of course you didn't; but *I* want to know."

"I have got more than a hundred pounds, Jeremiah."

"So—you've been saving up secretly, unbeknown to me!"

"It was done for your good, Jeremiah; it is all for you. Women are not as strong as men, nor as bold and venture-

some, but they see further sometimes. 'Perhaps,' I thought to myself, 'one day Jeremiah may want a little help; there may be something he wishes to do and is just a little short. Then I will give him my savings, and he will praise me for my prudence and foresight."

"I praise you now, mother," said Jeremiah. "Can you lay your hands on the money? Is it in your room?"

"No, Jeremiah; it is in the Post-office Savings-bank."

"Curse it! You can't get it out to-day. What's the good of it when I want it now—this very minute?"

"What for, Jeremiah?"

"That's my business. Go on about the old thief. He pretended to be very sweet, did he, and tried to pump you? What's that?"

He clutched his mother, shaking like one in an ague. They were in a narrow lane, and a boy in their rear had uttered a loud shout, and had thrown a stone at a bird. The boy ran on, and the colour returned to Jeremiah's face.

"Jeremiah!" whispered Mrs. Pamflett.

"Well?"

"You have been doing something wrong. You are in trouble."

"Yes, I am in trouble. I have been robbed—swindled—tricked and ruined by a damned scoundrel. If I had him here now, in this quiet lane, with no one near, his life wouldn't be worth a moment's purchase. There, the murder's out! What did I say?"

"You said, 'the murder's out.'"

"Did I?" he exclaimed, with a nervous laugh. "Murder, eh? Well, if it's my life against another man's—"

"Is it as bad as that, Jeremiah?"

"It is. I am in a fearful hole, and I must get out of it. Look here, mother. Ever since I was born you've been drumming in my ears that you cared for nothing in the world but me, that you lived only for me, that you loved no one but me, that you would do anything for me—never mind what—anything, anything! Is it true, or a lie?"

"It is true, Jeremiah," said Mrs. Pamflett, her thin lips set, but slightly parted, and her eyes glittering like cold steel. "If you're in danger, you must get out of it. If I can help you to get out of it, you have only to show me the

way. You don't know what a woman like me—what a mother like me—is capable of. I will show you. A scoundrel has ruined you, and something must be done to save you. I understand: I understand. Whatever it is, if it is for me to do it, I am ready. I have never spoken one angry word to you, and I won't say one word to you now to reproach you for not having confided in me before to-day. If you had made your fortune I was to share it. You are in trouble now, and I will share it. Give me a kiss, and say you love me!"

"I should be a beast if I didn't," said Jeremiah, kissing her. "You're something like a mother!"

"Jeremiah, if that venomous wretch Phœbe Farebrother had married you, would you be in danger now?"

"No; there would be nothing to trouble me if she hadn't rounded on me. I shouldn't have been compelled to do what I have done."

"Ah! She called you a reptile, and I am your mother. Oh, to be even with her—to be even with her!"

Half an hour afterward Jeremiah Pamflett was in the presence of Miser Farebrother. The miser received his

managing clerk with more than graciousness; there was even cordiality in his manner, and had Jeremiah's usually clear mind not been unbalanced by the threatening clouds which hung above him, this apparently favourable demeanour would have rendered him suspicious, and put him on his guard. Experience had taught him that there was always mischief in the wind when Miser Farebrother's words were smooth and fair.

"I sent a telegram for you, Jeremiah," said Miser Farebrother.

"Yes, sir," said Jeremiah; "my mother told me so. Fortunately I was on my way to you."

"You have brought the books with you?"

"Here they are, sir."

"You anticipate my wishes, Jeremiah. What master was ever served as I am served by you—so conscientiously, so faithfully! Is the bank-book here? Yes, yes; I see it is. We will go into the accounts presently. Before I sent for you, Jeremiah, I was in great pain, and feared I had not long to live. That kind of feeling makes a man sad—it unsettles him, and he is apt to repine at the hard fate which

seems determined to snatch him from all the joys of life I have not had many of them, and the consolation I had looked forward to in your contemplated union with my ungrateful child has been denied me. You look tired, Jeremiah. Doubtless you have been up late at night, attending to correspondence connected with the business, and running through the accounts."

"I have been working very hard," said Jeremiah.

"That is it. When I did the work myself I also used to sit up night after night poring over the books. An anxious mind, Jeremiah—an anxious mind. And you resemble me—oh, how you resemble me! What does a late night now and then matter to the young and strong? They can bear it; it leaves no ill effects behind. *I* could bear it once; *I* was once young and strong as you are; *I* was once filled with hope and enthusiasm. And now, look at me. I am a wreck, a feeble wreck, scarcely able to contend with an infant. My strength gone, my hope and enthusiasm gone, my confidence gone in every being in the world with the exception of you and your mother. No reward can be too great for service so faithful! You are affected. I thank

you, Jeremiah—I thank you! That sympathizing look, those genuine tears, testify to the friendship you bear toward me."

In point of fact, Jeremiah had taken his handkerchief from his pocket and had dabbed his forehead with it, and it was this action which Miser Farebrother chose to construe into an exhibition of sympathy. Jeremiah's face was damp with perspiration; he was bewildered by the flow of words which fell like honey from the miser's lips; bewildered also by the presence of the master he had wronged and robbed, of the man who held his fate in his hands. Lying back in his chair, Miser Farebrother seemed to have scarcely an hour's life in him; his strength seemed to be ebbing away, and death to be fast approaching. What if he were to die there, within the hour, while Jeremiah was in the room? Then all would be well. He could obtain possession of the valueless bracelet; he could obtain possession of the hoards of money which Miser Farebrother had put in some secret place, which, the miser dead, Jeremiah and his mother would have little difficulty in finding. Yes; then all would be well. Before he had presented himself to his

master, he had confided to his mother all the particulars of the danger which threatened him, and they had debated what had best be done. His mother had said, "If Miser Farebrother were out of the way," and then had paused. If Miser Farebrother were out of the way! That is, if he were dead! Yes; if he were dead! "What then?" Jeremiah had asked, after a terrible silence, during which their minds were threading labyrinths of awful possibilities of action which would extricate Jeremiah from his peril. "What then, mother?" Jeremiah had asked. "Why, then," his mother had replied, "we could get the bracelet, and would find a means to restore it immediately to the lady from whom it had been stolen. It would have to be done carefully and secretly; it would be necessary that we should not be seen or suspected in the matter. The bracelet restored, the lady would have nothing to complain of. She has not been robbed of money; only we and the old man upstairs know where the money came from which was lent upon the bracelet, and only we should be the losers."

"We could get his hidden treasure as well, mother," Jeremiah had said. "No one but ourselves knows of that.

If it were necessary, we could leave England for a time." But this suggestion had been stoutly opposed by Mrs. Pamflett. "It would never do," she had said. "Our disappearance would draw instant suspicion upon us. We have managed for him so many years—I here in Parksides, you in the London office. No, Jeremiah; we must stop and brave it out. I am certain there would be very little to fear, and that neither the policeman nor the cabman would be able to identify you. Besides, the bracelet restored, there would be no charge. The lady's maid stole it, not you, and she will not come back. She is in sure hiding, and so is that monster Captain Ablewhite. You would be safe, Jeremiah—you would be safe." And then she repeated, "If Miser Farebrother were out of the way!" Already their dark thoughts had compassed the result. The means had not been mentioned or discussed, but they were ready for any expedient, however desperate which would bring it about and remove the threatened danger. Mrs. Pamflett, to insure her son's safety, was prepared for any risk to herself, for any sacrifice.

And here, sitting within a few inches of Jeremiah, was

the man whose death meant life and liberty for him—was the man who could make a felon of him, who could ruin him absolutely and for ever and ever! "If he were to die now in his chair!" thought Jeremiah. Then came the thought that Miser Farebrother was an old man, weak and nerveless, and that two strong hands around his neck would squeeze the life out of him in a very few moments. It would be soon over, and there would be an end to the tortures Jeremiah was suffering. Meanwhile Miser Farebrother was speaking again.

"Were those the office keys jingling in your pocket, Jeremiah, when you took out your handkerchief? Let me see them; it may be the last opportunity I shall have of handling the old friends. Yes, here they are, all on a single ring—the key of the office door, the key of the room in which you sleep, the keys of the safe and the deed and cash boxes. All here, all here! Have you duplicates of them? No! Then without these keys you could not enter the office, you could not open the safe? Come, old friends, into *my* drawer you go—and you are safely locked there, and the key in my pocket!"

And now, to Jeremiah's astonishment and consternation, Miser Farebrother rose to his feet and stood upright before his knavish clerk. All his apparent weakness had disappeared; his face was flushed with anger; in his eyes there was a look of stern resolution.

"I summoned you here," he said, and his firm voice struck terror to Jeremiah's heart, "to obtain not only an explanation but satisfaction from you. Doubtless you have read this."

He held out to Jeremiah the newspaper containing the account of the robbery of the diamond bracelet. Mechanically Jeremiah took the paper; but he did not look further than the heading: "A Strange Affair—The Biters Bit."

"Answer me," said the miser. "Have you read it?"

"No," faltered Jeremiah.

"How do you know you have not read it when you have scarcely glanced at the paper I have given you? That you lie is proved by your side pocket, which would not bulge out as it does if it did not contain a copy of this damnable strange affair, by which you have swindled me out of four thousand pounds."

"I did not swindle you," Jeremiah found courage to say. "I believed the diamonds were genuine."

"You lie again, and you will continue to lie. But it will not help you. I will have my money back! Do you hear, you thief?—I will have my money back, which you and your confederates have shared between you! I will not wait long for it. Before twelve o'clock to-morrow you shall count it out to me on this table. If you do not, you shall stand in the felon's dock. All your cunning shall not save you. I am a fool to give you one moment's grace. You thief! you scoundrel! you swindler! I will have my money! my money! my money! Have I not toiled for it all my life?—and now to find myself robbed by a scoundrel I snatched from the gutter! If you don't pay me what you have stolen from me I will so pursue you that your life shall be a slow torture. You shall wish you were dead; but you shall live to suffer. At least I will have revenge, and I will pay for it. I will have your heart's blood, to the last drop! My money! my money! my money!"

His passion exhausted him, and he was compelled to stop. His torrent of furious words had, in the first instance,

overwhelmed Jeremiah with despair; but as the miser went on, this feeling was gradually replaced by one of fierce malignity. He grew cooler every moment.

"Do you wish to know why I wanted the books?" continued Miser Farebrother. "I will tell you. To-morrow they will be placed in the hands of an accountant, who shall go through them and examine them, and who will tell me the full extent of your robberies; for my eyes are opened now. I have been blind! blind! This swindle of the bracelet is not your only theft; there are others, and I will have them ferreted out, and you shall repay me to the last farthing. You thief! you have fattened upon the money you have stolen from me—you have grown rich by your knavery! Well, I will beggar you—every shilling you possess is mine, and I will have it. I leave it to you to judge whether I am in earnest or not, and whether I will do what I have threatened. Do you wish to know why I wanted the keys of the office and the safe? I will tell you. It is that you shall never again enter my doors—it is that it shall be out of your power to destroy the evidences of your guilt which are to be found there. Till twelve to-morrow

—not one moment longer! Then, when restitution is made —full, complete restitution—you and your cat-mother shall pack, the pair of you! I will fling you both into the gutter, and if you rot and die there, so much the better! I will look down upon you and laugh. Is what I say plain enough?"

"Quite," replied Jeremiah, in whose heart now reigned a cold, ferocious cunning; but his voice was very humble. "You force me to confess."

"I thought I should succeed in that, at least. But no confessions will satisfy me without my money, you vile, ungrateful thief! My money! Do you hear?—my money!

"You shall have it; you shall not lose one farthing by me."

"Good! good! You are rich, then? You have robbed me systematically! You villainous knave!"

"I am not rich. I have saved a little, and I have friends who will assist me in the misfortune which has overtaken me. I have not robbed you systematically; you do me an injustice, as you will learn when the accountant has

gone through the books. I court inquiry—I invite it—I *will* have it, now that you have accused me, and I will compel you to admit that I have served you faithfully. My character is dear to me, and I will not allow you to cast suspicion upon it. As for the bracelet, I *did* believe that the stones were genuine; and if they *were* genuine they would have been worth ten times the sum you lent on them. I laugh at the public exposure with which you threaten me. Me it cannot harm; you, it can. For, after all, I am only your servant; you are the principal. That the business of the bracelet was introduced to me by a man whose character will not bear investigation is true. I did not know this at the time; but what if I did? He did not ask *me* to lend him the money, he asked me to apply to *you*. Is it the first questionable transaction you have been mixed up in? Perhaps I could give evidence on that point. It is pretty well known that Miser Farebrother would do anything for money; if he could sell his soul for it he would not hesitate long. You mustn't mind my speaking in this way; I have nothing to fear, and I am defending myself."

Miser Farebrother was not in the least discomposed by

Jeremiah's defence of himself. "Words, Jeremiah, words!" he said, with a sneering laugh. "Are you a fool as well as a rogue? What you have said is as so much air, and will not save you from the felon's fate. In everything I have done the law is on my side; I have seen to that. As to what is between us, let matters be settled quickly. You have saved a little, you say; you have friends who will assist you. Good! By noon to-morrow pay me the money you induced me to advance upon the bracelet. If this is not done, at one o'clock I will place it in the hands of the police, with a faithful description of the manner in which it came into my possession. The police are looking for you, you shallow knave, and I will set them on your track. Then see if you can save yourself. The office accounts will come afterward. If you have stolen, you shall repay—with interest, you thief!"

"I will not use abusive words in return," said Jeremiah. "There is nothing for which I am to blame, except the bracelet, and I was an innocent victim. You have it, of course?"

"Trust me for that," replied Miser Farebrother; "I have

it safe enough. Do you think I have been simple enough to part with it?"

"Well, give it to me," said Jeremiah, "and before twelve to-morrow morning I will return you the money you advanced on it."

Miser Farebrother burst out into a loud laugh. "Give it to you, Jeremiah, and simply for the asking! You miserable knave, do you think I am in my second childhood? No, Jeremiah, no! When you give me back my money you shall have it—not till then. Fail in this restitution, and you have but a few hours of freedom before you. By my blood! by my life! I will abide by what I say?"

"Then there is an end of it," said Jeremiah, "and it *shall* be as you say. I must get back to London to-night: so that I may be here in time to-morrow."

"Be sure you *are* in time, Jeremiah!"

"I *will* be sure!" said Jeremiah, and left the room.

The moment he closed the door behind him he felt his mother's hand clasp his. She led him down the stairs, and Jeremiah, hearing the sound of his own footsteps, did not wonder that he did not hear hers. It would have been

difficult, she trod so softly, and she had taken off her boots. She accompanied him like a spirit: not the only one which walked beside and before him. By his blood! By his life! Miser Farebrother's words. Well, it might come to that. What other road of escape was left open?

In the kitchen below, Mrs Pamflett put her forefinger to her lips.

"Speak low, Jeremiah. I listened outside, and heard all. He has the heart of a devil! That is his gratitude for faithful service. His life has been in my hands for years past. I could have sent him to his grave and no one the wiser. I am your cat-mother, am I? And he will fling us into the gutter, and laugh at us? He and his daughter are a pair. He has had the best years of our lives, and he spits in our faces. Have you told me the whole truth, Jeremiah? About the books and the safe—is there anything against you there? Can he get you into further trouble?"

"Mother," said Jeremiah, "if he calls in an accountant, as he threatens to do, I am lost. There is no hope of escape for me. If I don't get back that bracelet, I am lost.

And he has money, too, here, hidden away, and not a soul knows it but him and ourselves."

"Not a soul, Jeremiah."

"No one comes to the house but us?"

"Not a person has been here for a month past."

"But—attend to me, mother—there comes here to-night, late, a man to see Miser Farebrother. It might be!"

"It might be," his mother echoed, gazing at her son with a fierce expectancy in her eyes.

"This man has been here frequently before; he has been in the habit of coming once in every six or seven weeks, and Miser Farebrother expects and receives him. They talk in secret in Miser Farebrother's room, with the door locked. You are never admitted. You are sent to bed, and sometimes you have awoke in the middle of the night, and have heard sounds in the miser's room, which proved that the man was still there. You never knew at what hour he went away, but it must have been nearly always not earlier than two or three in the morning. It might be!"

"It might be."

"That he came upon business is a reasonable construction,

and that this business was of a nature which would not bear the light is another reasonable construction. Once, passing the miser's room on the way to your own, you heard them quarrelling and you heard the miser say, 'I have but to lift my finger, and I could send you back to the hulks! I will give you twenty pounds for the bonds, and no more.' A reasonable story, mother?"

"Perfectly reasonable, Jeremiah. Living here in seclusion as he has done for so many years, with no servant but me, who is to dispute it? That is not the end, Jeremiah."

"That is not the end. To-night, late, the man comes again, and is admitted. You go to bed as usual, and leave them together as usual. To-morrow morning you get up, and wait for Miser Farebrother to ring his bell for breakfast. He does not ring it, mother," and Jeremiah put his lips close to her ear. "Can you guess the reason why he does not ring his bell?"

"I can guess the reason, Jeremiah," she replied, in a cold, malignant voice. "After to-morrow he will never raise his hand again!"

"And I am safe!" said Jeremiah.

"And you are safe, my dear, dear lad; and he is punished as he deserves to be."

"He has been in the grounds at night very often these last few weeks, mother?"

"Very often, Jeremiah."

"Whether he dies in the house or out of the house, the story holds good."

"The story holds good," she echoed.

"You can describe the man's dress and appearance: there is nothing like being exact in these matters: there are peculiarities about him by which you will be able to recognise him when he is arrested."

"Leave all that to me, Jeremiah. I will show you what I am capable of. And you—where will you be in the morning?"

"In the office in London, as usual, having possessed myself of the keys which he tricked out of me upstairs. Give me a drink of brandy—ah! that puts life into one! And some bread and meat—no, I cannot eat."

"You must, Jeremiah; you must! It will give you strength. That's right. Force yourself to eat. Don't

drink much. Keep cool for what is to come! Now go—and keep out of sight. You must not be seen in the village. The monster upstairs never wanders near the beeches; you will be safe there. I will come to you in an hour or two."

Stealthily, warily, Jeremiah crept from the house, and proceeded in the direction indicated by his mother. The sun was setting, and blood was in the sky. It shone upon the rising ground and upon the topmost branches of the trees. His eyes did not rest upon the glories of a lovely sunset, but upon blotches and streaks of blood. Once, standing where he could not himself be seen, he turned to the house, and watched the blood-red stains in the windows. Behind the crimson panes lurid shadows moved; the rooms were alive with murderous shapes and forms engaged in fierce conflict. Above him and all around him lurked the spirit of murder!

CHAPTER VI.

A DREAM OF AN ANGEL.

"Oh Aunt Leth, Aunt Leth!" cried Phœbe. "Can nothing be done?—nothing, nothing!"

"I fear not, dear child," said Aunt Leth, in a voice of quiet despair. "Your uncle and I have thought of every possible way in which our dear home might be saved, but thinking and talking will not stave off impending ruin. To-morrow we shall be beggared and disgraced."

There was no light in the room. On a stool sat Uncle Leth, with his face buried in his hands; Aunt Leth sat on a chair by his side with her arm upon his neck, vainly striving to console him; Fanny lay upon the sofa, sobbing; Robert sat moodily in a corner. To-morrow the acceptance for three hundred pounds was due, and they had not a shilling to meet it.

They had been talking in the dark for an hour, and the

parents had deemed it right that their children should be made acquainted with the blow that was about to fall upon them. Phœbe, as one of the family, could not be left in ignorance, although they would cheerfully have spared her the grief into which they were plunged. All was now known, and ruin stared them in the face.

Aunt Leth was the least demonstrative of the group, and she suffered perhaps the most. Her trembling limbs, her quivering voice, her pitiful glances as her eyes wandered around, denoted the agony of her soul. Phœbe could not bear to look toward her. Dark as was the room, she saw and understood it all, and she was racked with anguish.

Had it been any other person than Jeremiah Pamflett from whom the money had been borrowed, they believed that some respite would have been granted them; but he was their bitterest enemy, and they were convinced that he was the moving spirit through whom the relentless decree had been issued that not a day's grace would be allowed. Troubles and griefs had fallen to the lot of Aunt Leth in the course of her happy married life, and she had met them cheerfully; but this overwhelming stroke had broken her

down. There are shocks against which the bravest cannot contend, and this was one.

"It is I," suddenly cried Uncle Leth, starting up, and pacing the room in a frenzy of excitement—"It is I who have brought this ruin and disgrace upon the beloved ones I should have shielded and protected! This is how I have repaid them for the love which has been showered upon me! Wretch that I am!—I do not deserve to live!"

They clung about him, and besought him to be calm. They called him by the most endearing names. Only Phœbe did not move from her chair.

It was terrible to witness his agony; but so sweet and tender and true were their ministerings that they succeeded in their loving endeavours. He burst into tears, and sank upon the stool, and laid his head upon his wife's knees.

"This morning," he said, presently, in a voice so pitiful that their tears flowed afresh, "as I walked to the bank I had a dream of hope. It was foolish, I know, and neither manly nor practical—for life's troubles are not to be surmounted by dreams—but I could not help it. These dreams

have happened to me, and I should have done my duty better to my dear ones here had I not encouraged them." He passed his hand across his forehead with the air of a man upon whom a sudden mental bewilderment had fallen. "What was I saying, mother?"

"You had a dream of hope," said Aunt Leth, raising his hand to her lips and kissing it, "as you walked to the bank this morning."

"I do not remember what it was," he said, helplessly; "only that an angel came forward and saved us."

Phœbe stole softly out of the room—so softly through the darkness that they did not for a little while observe her absence. To a certain extent she had kept aloof from them during the last hour.

She went up to the bedroom occupied by her and Fanny. She wanted to be alone. What was it her uncle had said? That an angel had come forward and saved them! The words impressed themselves upon her mind.

How kind these dear ones had been to her from her earliest remembrance! Giving her ever of their best, eager

that she should share their joys and pleasures, making dresses for her, and bringing light into her life, which but for them would have been utterly devoid of it. How sweet, how good they had been!

What had she given them in return? Nothing. True, they had not asked for anything, had not expected anything. All the more precious their tender services of love.

Their more than love. The unselfish sacrifices they had made for her, of which they spoke never a word. Not to be measured by a human standard.

It was only on the afternoon of this dolorous day that it had come to her knowledge that her aunt had paid a doctor's bill for her of some seven or eight pounds, and she knew that her illness must have considerably increased the household expenses of the once happy home, now on the point of being wrecked.

An angel had come forward to save them? No, not an angel, but a loving, grateful girl! It was in her power, at least, to make an effort which by a happy chance might be successful. She could go to her father and appeal to him. She would humble herself to him; she would implore

him on her knees; she would promise to obey him in everything—

"In everything?" Yes, in everything. She shuddered as she thought of Jeremiah Pamflett. But even that sacrifice she would make if all else failed.

The effort must be made at once—this very night—and it must be made without first consulting Aunt Leth. Full well did she know that the dear woman would divine the sacrifice she was prepared to make, and would endeavour to prevent it.

She put on her hat and mantle, and quietly left the house. A few doors down the street she met 'Melia Jane.

"Why, Miss Phœbe!" cried that model servant-of-all-work. "Where are you going all alone?"

"If my aunt or my cousin asks for me," said Phœbe, hurriedly, "tell them I have gone to Parksides to see my father."

Before 'Melia Jane could reply, Phœbe had turned the corner of the street, and was hastening to the railway station.

CHAPTER VII.

BETTER THAN ANY DAY-DREAM.

At five o'clock of the following afternoon two men paused in front of Uncle Leth's house in Camden Town, and looked up at the windows.

"This is the number," said one.

"Yes," replied the other; "she lives here."

A rat-tat with the knocker brought 'Melia Jane to the street door.

"Is Mr. Lethbridge at home?" asked one of the men.

"No, sir," replied 'Melia Jane; "he's at his bank."

"Is Mrs. Lethbridge in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Her niece, Miss Phœbe Farebrother, is stopping here, is she not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is *she* in?"

"Yes, sir; but you can't see her, if that's what you've come for."

"Why can't we see her?"

"'Cause she's too ill to be seen by anybody but us. Poor thing! she's no sooner out of one fit than she's into another."

"Ah!" And the speaker glanced at his companion. "I'm sorry to hear it—very, very sorry." His voice was soothing and sympathizing, and 'Melia Jane, who had not been too favourably impressed by the strangers, became instantly mollified. "How long has she been ill?"

"Oh, come!" exclaimed 'Melia Jane, relapsing into her original view. "*You* don't belong to the family, as I'm aware of."

"No, we do not, my good girl," observed the man; "but that would not prevent me from feeling pity for any young lady who is ill, I hope." He smiled so kindly upon 'Melia Jane that she did not know what to think of him. "Perhaps it's what occurred last night that has upset her?"

"I don't know what occurred last night," said 'Melia Jane, sharply; "do you?"

"Why, my girl, a number of things occur every night. Which particular one do you refer to?"

"I once knowed a girl," said 'Melia Jane, with an air of scornful defiance, "who knowed another girl who had a friend who lived in Pump Court."

"Well?" said the stranger, seemingly much amused.

"In Pump Court he lived," said 'Melia Jane. "And he lived *by* it as well as *in* it. Lor' bless you! The artful way in which he'd pump people, so's to get out of 'em every blessed thing he wanted to know—it was a sight, that's what it was!"

The man laughed heartily. "So you think we've come to pump you, my good girl! Perhaps you're right and perhaps you're wrong. Now if I were to ask you whether Miss Phœbe Farebrother slept at home last night—I mean here, in her aunt's house—I suppose you would call that pumping?"

"I should—and I shouldn't answer you."

"But why, my good girl?—why? Is there any reason for secrecy in so simple a matter? However, I will *not* ask you, and in proof that I'm not quite the bad sort of

fellow you take me for, I will just inquire whether this brooch belongs to Miss Farebrother."

He produced the brooch which Mrs. Pamflett had given to Phœbe on her birthday.

"Yes, it's hern," said 'Melia Jane, holding out her hand for it.

"Did she wear it yesterday?"

"Pumping ag'in!"

"My good girl, you're enough to put one out of patience. Isn't it an act of kindness to restore lost property? But one must be sure first that it gets back into the hands of the right owner. Can you remember whether Miss Farebrother wore this brooch yesterday?"

"No, I can't remember. And now I come to think of it, I 'ain't seen her wear it for a long time past."

"But she wore this yesterday." He produced a veil.

"Yes," said 'Melia Jane, a little eagerly; "she had it on when she went away last night to—"

"Why don't you finish, my good girl? When she went away last night to Parksides." He returned the brooch and the veil to his pocket. "I won't trouble you any more.

Be kind enough to tell Mrs. Lethbridge that we wish to see her."

"What name shall I say?"

"Never mind the name; she will not know it. You can say, on particular business."

Leaving the men in the passage with the street door open, 'Melia Jane went up to Phœbe's bedroom, and gave the message to her mistress, who came down at once, and asked the stranger what his business was.

"It will be best for me to speak to you in private," said the man.

Aunt Leth led the visitors into the parlour, and the one who had spoken all through commenced the conversation.

"My name is Beeminster, and I am attached to the police force. I am engaged upon an inquiry of a serious nature, and it has, in the first place, led me to your house."

Aunt Leth's heart fainted within her. Knowing nothing whatever of business, or of the pains and penalties attending the dishonouring of an acceptance for three hundred pounds, she feared that the terrible anxieties through which she had passed with respect to her husband's liability were

about to be renewed. She had believed that this special difficulty had been happily tided over for a time, and her reason for this belief needs in this place a word of explanation.

Almost heart-broken, Uncle Leth had left his home on this morning to walk to the bank in which he had held an honourable though humble position all his life. He could not touch his breakfast; he could not speak; he could scarcely see before him. So utterly prostrate was he that his wife had refrained from uttering a single word upon another anxious subject which filled her with alarm. Phœbe had been absent all the night, and had returned as Uncle Leth was getting out of bed. Her condition was so pitiable as to cause Aunt Leth and Fanny the utmost distress. There were marks of violence upon her, she was bruised and bleeding, her clothes were torn, her mind was distraught. They could get nothing from her but sobs and tears. On the previous night when her absence was remarked, and they learnt from 'Melia Jane that she had gone to Parksides, they were almost distracted. Tom Barley, being off duty, was sought for immediately, and upon being made acquainted

with what had taken place, had started off instantly for Parksides to protect Phœbe and bring her back. He had not much time to spare, as he had to go on his beat again early in the morning; but he managed to get to Parksides and to reconnoitre for half an hour. He did not succeed in finding Phœbe, and he was compelled to return to London without her—determined, however, to go back to Parksides when he was free again, and restore Phœbe to her relatives. Phœbe's reappearance in Camden Town rendered the carrying out of his resolution unnecessary. He had seen something at Parksides which perplexed and troubled him; but he had mentioned it to no one.

Utterly absorbed and overwhelmed by the disgrace and ruin with which he was threatened, Uncle Leth knew nothing of Phœbe's absence or return, and he started for his bank with so heavy a weight upon his heart that he almost prayed for death. No day-dreams on this morning; the reality was too crushing. He thought it was a dull morning; but the sun was shining and the air was sweet So he walked on—to ruin, as he believed.

But a wonderful thing occurred, and yet a simple thing.

For, surely, when, within a quarter of a mile of the bank he was clapped on the shoulder by Fred Cornwall, an incident so trivial was scarcely worth a second thought. But when he reflected upon it afterward, he was of the opinion that it was worth much more than a second thought, and that indeed it was the most wonderful thing that ever happened to him, that for the first time in his life he should be clapped on his shoulder by Fred Cornwall while he was walking to business. Not only the most wonderful thing, but the most fortunate, as it turned out.

Fred greeted him heartily and cordially, and he made no reply. At first Fred did not notice his strange silence, for the young man was bubbling over with an event of great importance which had on this morning occurred in his own career. He had received a brief in a case in which some hundreds of thousands of pounds were involved, and he was in high feather about it. With great animation he made Uncle Leth acquainted with this piece of good fortune, and went on talking and talking until Uncle Leth's singular silence and abstraction had their effect

upon him, and he suddenly paused and asked Uncle Leth whether he was unwell.

"Pardon me, Mr. Cornwall," said Uncle Leth humbly; "I have not understood a word of what you were saying."

The "Mr." Cornwall struck strangely upon Fred's ears. It had always been Fred; but the fact was, Uncle Leth, feeling that he had lost his honoured place in the world, deemed the familiarity an act of presumption on his part. Therefore the "Mr." instead of Fred.

Then Fred, bending down to look into Uncle Leth's face, saw that there were tears in his eyes. Uncle Leth was as tall as Fred, but on this morning he stooped lower than usual; if he could have hid his face from the sight of all men, he would have been glad to do so.

"Uncle Leth," said Fred gently, "what is the matter?"

"Don't speak to me like that," sobbed Uncle Leth, turning away; "don't speak to me like that!"

"Ah, but I must," said Fred, hooking his arm in Uncle Leth's. "You are in trouble, and you want me to run. Not likely, Uncle Leth. I love you and yours too deeply. Only one word first. Has Phœbe anything to do with it?"

"No, Fred."

"You *are* in trouble?"

"Yes."

"About money?"

"Yes."

"Then tell me all about it. I give you my honest word I will not leave you till you do. You have a good ten minutes to spare. You started from home earlier than usual this morning."

It was a fact, but until this moment Uncle Leth had not been aware of it.

"Now tell me, Uncle Leth."

And so, in less than the ten minutes there were to spare, the story of the impending ruin was told.

"And is that all?" cried Fred, to Uncle Leth's astonishment.

Uncle Leth strove to disengage his arm from Fred's. It was cruel of the young man to make light of such a blow. But Fred held Uncle Leth's arm all the tighter, and he could not release himself.

"Do they know it at home?" asked Fred.

"Yes."

"And you have left all of them in trouble?"

"They are heart-broken," sobbed Uncle Leth; "and so am I!"

"Now, Uncle Leth," said Fred, with a comfortable squeeze at Uncle Leth's arm, "just you listen to me a moment. There is nothing to be heart-broken about when you have a friend like me at your elbow."

"Don't mock me, Fred."

"God forbid that I should! What! After all your sweet goodness to my darling Phœbe! after all your kindness to me, to think that I should mock you! I am going to get you out of your trouble. A nice thing friendship would be if it wasn't equal to such a little matter as this!"

"A little matter, Fred! You call it a little matter!"

"Of course I do. On my word and honour as a man, as a true friend, you shall have the acceptance for three hundred pounds in your hands, if not to-night, at all events to-morrow. Give me the name and address of the man who holds it and who demands his pound of flesh. He

shall have it to the last grain. Leave it to me, and go to your work with a cheerful heart."

"Do you mean it, Fred?" asked Uncle Leth, solemnly.

"As truly as I stand here! As truly as I love my Phœbe, the dearest girl in all the wide world, of whom I should be unworthy if I failed you at such a pinch—as truly as I hope, despite all obstacles, to make her my wife, and to live a long and happy life with her! Quick, now, your time is almost up. Give me Shylock's name and address, and the thing is done. Ah; that is it, is it? I shall be able to settle the affair with him."

"God bless you, Fred!" said Uncle Leth, carried away by the young man's impetuous enthusiasm. "God in heaven bless you!"

"I hope so. And you and yours, and my own dear girl! Why, here's a telegraph office, three doors from the bank! We have just forty-five seconds to send a telegram to Aunt Leth. I will write it out. 'My dear Wife,—Do not worry about the bill. It is paid, and I am happy. God bless all at home! Uncle Leth.' How much? One-and-a-penny-ha'penny. How is that? Oh yes, the address!

Quite right. Tenpence-ha'penny change. Thank you. Now, here we are outside, and there's your bank; and—hi!—here's a hansom. Good-bye, Uncle Leth. What a lovely morning!"

He rung Uncle Leth's hand, gave him a bright smile, jumped into the cab, and was whirled away.

How he managed it need not be here recapitulated. Sufficient that he *did* manage it, and that the affair was arranged before one o'clock. Perhaps he borrowed a trifle from a friend or two; perhaps he scraped up every shilling of his own; perhaps he paid a business visit to a gentleman whose trade-mark was three beautiful golden balls; perhaps he left another acceptance for a smaller amount than the original bill, with his own and a good friend's name on it, in Shylock's hands. But all the "perhapsing" in the world would have been useless had he not succeeded in bringing the matter to a satisfactory issue. And there he was at the bank exactly as the clock struck one, and asking to be allowed to say a word to Mr. Lethbridge, whispered in his ear, "It is all right."

CHAPTER VIII.

PHŒBE IN PERIL.

AFTER this breaking out of the sun in the dear home in Camden Town, with respect to the money trouble, Aunt Leth's heart, as has been stated, fainted within her when Mr. Beeminster, introducing himself, said that he had called upon an inquiry of a serious nature. She mustered courage to say: "Is it anything about a debt? Is it anything about my husband?"

Mr. Beeminster stared at her, and answered: "No, not that I am aware of. The inquiry upon which I am engaged relates to Miss Farebrother—your niece—and her father."

A sigh of relief escaped Aunt Leth's bosom, and Mr. Beeminster stared the harder at her.

"Have you heard anything?" he asked. "Do you know what has occurred?"

"I do not understand you," she replied.

"Miss Farebrother has resided with you for—how long?"

"I cannot exactly say. For some time; since she left her father's house and came to us. But why do you question me?"

"You are not compelled to answer. It may be that you have something to conceal."

"I have nothing to conceal," said Aunt Leth indignantly.

"Or that, Miss Farebrother having got herself into trouble, it is your wish to screen her."

"My niece has not got herself into trouble," said Aunt Leth, feeling herself in a certain sense helpless in the hands of this man. "She is not capable of doing anything wrong. I will answer any reasonable questions you may put to me."

"It may be as well. Otherwise you might be suspected of a guilty knowledge. Miss Farebrother left her father's house and came to reside with you?"

"Yes; she has been in the habit of coming and stopping with us, from time to time, since she was a child."

"But never for so long a time as this?"

"That is true. We have a deep love for her. Our home is hers."

"She ought to be grateful for it."

"She is."

"Her friends will best serve her by being open and frank."

"But what has our dear child done?" asked Aunt Leth, in an imploring tone. "What has she done?"

"You will hear presently, if you have a little patience. On this last occasion of her coming to you did she do so with her father's consent?"

"It is a family secret," replied Aunt Leth despairingly.

"It will tell against her if you refuse to answer. I am here in the cause of justice."

"Of justice?"

"Yes, of justice. You refuse, then, to say whether she left her home in Parksides with her father's consent?"

"I do not refuse. Her father was not kind to her; he turned her from his house."

"Then when she came here they were not upon friendly terms. It is the construction which every person would

place upon it. Have you any objection to say why he turned her from his house?"

"He wished to force her into a hateful marriage; she would not consent."

"Were you and her father upon friendly terms?"

"We were not."

"You harboured her, then, against his wish?"

"She had no other shelter. We have always regarded her as a child of our own. Her mother was my sister."

"I know it. Since she has been living permanently with you has Miss Farebrother heard from her father?"

"He wrote to her, but not in answer to any letter of hers."

"Did he not say in his communication that if she would obey him she could return to Parksides?"

"Yes," said Aunt Leth, amazed at the extent of Mr. Beeminster's knowledge, and in an agony of apprehension.

"Did Miss Farebrother reply to that letter?"

"No, she did not."

"I suppose that her conduct met with your approval? She would be guided by you?"

"I endeavoured to guide her aright. Her father showed no love for her."

"But you may be prejudiced. Since your marriage there has been no love lost between you and Miser Farebrother?"

"I cannot deny it."

"I beg your pardon; these are matters which, perhaps, I should not go into. They will, no doubt, be investigated elsewhere. They are, however, an evidence of prejudice. Did Miss Farebrother leave your house last night?"

"She did."

"With your knowledge and consent?"

"We did not know of it until she was gone. She met our servant, and gave her a message to us that she had gone to Parksides."

"Did you send after her?"

"We did."

"Who was your messenger?"

"A young man of the name of Barley."

"Barley!" said Mr. Beeminster, turning to his companion with a look of intelligence. "Tom Barley?"

"Yes."

"There is a man of that name in the force."

"It is the same. He is a policeman."

"Ah! Did he obtain any information of her?"

"No. He could not remain long away. He had to return to his duty here in London."

"So that he came back alone?"

"Yes."

"Miss Farebrother, however, came back?"

"Yes."

"She is in the house now?"

"She is."

"I believe she is not well?"

"She is very ill, and I am anxious to go to her."

"A little patience, please, and all will be cleared up. At what hour of the night or morning did she come back?"

"At between nine and ten o'clock this morning."

"A strange hour for a young lady to come home. Had she been to Parksides?"

"I do not know to a certainty."

"She has not told you?"

"No."

"Did she see her father?"

"I cannot say."

"You do not know? She has not told you?"

"She has not."

"Then if she went to Parksides and saw her father, she is concealing the fact from you?" Aunt Leth did not reply. These cold, relentless questions, with their strange and close adherence to fact, bewildered her. "When she left this house last night she was in good health. Contradict me if such is not the case, and in anything I may say which is opposed to the truth. She was in good health at that time. She returned this morning, sick and ill. Has she worn this veil lately?" He produced it, and handed it to Aunt Leth.

"She wore it yesterday."

"She must have worn it when she went out last night. It was found in the grounds of Parksides to-day. Therefore Miss Farebrother must have been there. Do you recognize this brooch?"

He handed her the brooch he had shown to 'Melia Jane.

"It was given to my dear niece by her father's housekeeper."

"Mrs. Pamflett?"

"Yes."

"It was found in the grounds of Parksides to-day." Mr. Beeminster took his companion aside and whispered a few words to him; the man nodded and left the room. Aunt Leth heard him close the street door behind him. "When, within your knowledge, did Miss Farebrother wear this brooch last?"

"I cannot say positively; it is a long time since. I believe she did not bring it away with her from Parksides when she left her father's house to come to us."

"Can you swear to that?"

"No; but my niece will be able to tell you."

"I shall not ask her; it might be used in evidence against her."

"In evidence against her! For God's sake tell me what you are here for! Do not keep me any longer in suspense!"

"Not for a moment longer. Miser Farebrother is dead."

"Dead!"

"Dead. Found murdered this morning in the grounds at Parksides. A cruel murder. I have brought a copy of an evening paper with me containing the information. It was just out as I came here. Would you like to read it? But you do not seem in a fit state. I will read it to you."

Mr. Beeminster unfolded the paper and read:

"FRIGHTFUL MURDER.—A MYSTERIOUS CASE.

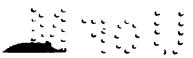
"This morning, at eleven o'clock, the discovery was made of a horrible murder committed on a small estate known as Parksides, on the outskirts of Beddington.

"For a number of years Parksides has been inhabited by a man who, from some cause or other, was generally spoken of as Miser Farebrother. He was a man, it is understood, of penurious habits, and the only servant in the house was a house-keeper, Mrs. Pamflett. He had one child, a daughter, who for some time past has not resided with him, but who found a home with an aunt and uncle living in London. Mrs. Pamflett bore the reputation of

being an attentive and capable servant, and of faithfully performing her duty. Like her master, however, she was not a favourite in the village. The establishment altogether was not in good repute, although the only charge that can be brought against the inmates is that they did not court society, and kept themselves from their neighbours. This remark does not apply to Miser Farebrother's daughter. She was generally liked, and has been in the habit of going frequently to London and paying long visits to her aunt and uncle. The only persons in Parksides yesterday, until the afternoon, were Miser Farebrother and Mrs. Pamflett, the house-keeper. Then the house-keeper was sent by her master to the telegraph office with a message to his manager in London, requesting him to come down to Parksides, presumably upon business. The business conducted in London was a money-lending business, and—Miser Farebrother being confined to his house by gout and rheumatism —the confidential manager here was Mr. Jeremiah Pamflett, the son of the house-keeper. Before the telegram could reach him in London Mr. Pamflett was on his way to his master, having an important matter of business to dis-

cuss with him. The business settled, Mr. Pamflett left for London.

"At about ten o'clock last night a man called at Parksides to see Miser Farebrother, and being expected, was admitted to Miser Farebrother's room. For the last three or four years this man has been in the habit of paying periodical visits to Miser Farebrother: he always came at night, and always departed after the house-keeper had retired to rest. This was in accordance with her master's orders. Last night as usual she retired to her room while her master and his visitor were closeted together. Before seeking her rest, however, she paused outside the door of her master's apartment, and inquired whether she could do anything for him. He called out to her that he did not require anything further from her, and that she was to go to bed. She obeyed him, and getting into bed, was soon asleep. She describes herself as a sound sleeper, and difficult to awake. It was strange, therefore, that she should awake in the middle of the night, with an impression that some person had entered the house. She looked at her watch; it was twenty minutes past one o'clock. Not being satisfied with



a mere impression, she left her room in her night-dress and went down to the kitchen. There, to her surprise, she saw Miser Farebrother's daughter. The house-keeper does not know how she got into the house, nor for how long a time she had been there. Miss Farebrother asked her angrily why she came down without being summoned, and the house-keeper, in explanation, replied that she had been awakened by a sound of some person moving in the house, and that she naturally came down to see what it was. Still speaking in anger, Miss Farebrother said that she was mistress there, and she ordered the house-keeper back to her room. After this order there was no apparent reason why the house-keeper should remain, and she retired from the kitchen and went to bed again. As she left the kitchen she observed a large knife, with a horn handle, which she frequently used for rough work, lying on the table.

"As she lay in bed the house-keeper shortly afterward heard the voices of two persons in altercation in the grounds, and she recognised the voices of her master and his daughter. It seemed to her that they were wrangling violently, but this was not an unusual occurrence when Miss Farebrother

was at Parksides. Miser Farebrother was, besides, a person of eccentric habits. He was frequently in the habit of wandering through his grounds in the middle of the night. The sounds grew fainter, as though the miser and his daughter were walking away; or, as the house-keeper explains, they may have entered the house and ceased their dispute. However it was, she fell asleep again, and did not awake till morning. Going down to her work, she found everything as she had left it on the previous night, with the exception that the knife with the horn handle was missing.

"Miser Farebrother usually rang for the house-keeper at nine o'clock in the morning. On this morning, however, he did not summon her at the accustomed time. Neither to this circumstance did she attach any particular importance.

"When ten o'clock struck, however, the house-keeper felt it strange that she did not hear her master's bell. She waited another half-hour, and then she went to his room. She knocked, and received no answer. Then she opened the door, and found that the room was empty, and that there

was no appearance of the bed having been slept in. Somewhat alarmed, but still not suspecting the dreadful truth, she went to her young mistress's room. That also was empty, and the bed had not been occupied.

"Her alarm increased. She searched the grounds for her master and mistress. Her mistress she did not find. Her master she did. He was lying upon the ground, at some distance from the house. Bending over him, she was horrified by the discovery that he was dead—not only that he was dead, but that he had been cruelly, ruthlessly murdered! A dreadful wound was in his breast, and near him was the knife with the horn handle, clotted with blood.

"She rushed into the village, and brought assistance back—a doctor and a policeman, who were followed by two or three idlers. It needed only a slight examination on the part of the doctor to prove that a frightful murder had been committed.

"Here, for the present, the matter rests. The inquest will be held to-morrow.

"Certain discoveries have already been made which it would be premature here to refer to. The affair is in the

hands of the police, who are confident they will succeed in bringing the murderer to justice."

Aunt Leth listened to the account of the murder with a feeling of unutterable horror. Quiet and observant, Mr. Beeminster carefully folded the newspaper and put it into his pocket, saying as he did so:

"The 'certain discoveries' to which the newspaper reporter says it would be premature to refer are Miss Farebrother's brooch and veil which were picked up in the grounds."

"Gracious God!" cried Aunt Leth, with a pallid face and horror-struck eyes. "You do not—you cannot suspect—"

"Best to say as little as possible," said Mr. Beeminster, rising.

"You brought a companion in with you," said Aunt Leth. "What was it you whispered to him, and why did he go away?"

Mr. Beeminster was standing near the window, which faced the street. He looked out, and Aunt Leth's eyes followed the direction of his. The man she referred to was

on the opposite side of the road, strolling a few steps leisurely this way and that, but never too far to lose a clear view of the house upon which his eyes were fixed.

"Have you placed him there to watch us?" asked Aunt Leth, faintly. "And for what reason?"

"A murder has been committed," replied Mr. Beeminster. "Miss Farebrother will most likely be served with a notice to attend the inquest to-morrow."

"It will kill her! it will kill her!" cried Aunt Leth.

Mr. Beeminster, without replying, quietly left the room.

CHAPTER IX.

FRED CORNWALL TO THE RESCUE.

So overwhelming was Aunt Leth's despair after Mr. Beeminster's departure that she almost lost her senses. She could not think coherently, but she had a vague consciousness that something—she knew not what—must be immediately done, and she put her hands over her face and pressed her forehead hard in the endeavour to recall her wandering thoughts. She was not successful; her mind grew more confused, and she might have remained for a long time in this most terrible bewilderment had it not been for a loud and rapid knocking at the street door. The interruption had a salutary effect upon her; it caused her to start to her feet, and to become sensible to what was actually occurring. What did that knocking portend? Some fresh calamity?

"Fred! Fred!" she cried.

He hastened into the room, and she fell into his arms, and sobbed there hysterically.

"Aunt Leth! Aunt Leth!" said Fred, in a soothing tone. "There, there, be calm! You have heard the dreadful news, then?"

"And you," whispered Aunt Leth, amazed that he should be so cool: his voice was solemn, it is true, but there was in it no note of despair: "you know all?"

"All," he replied. "I bought a newspaper, and came here at once. Has Phœbe been told?"

"No."

"My poor girl!" said Fred. "How will she bear it?"

"What paper did you buy?" asked Aunt Leth, bewildered by his manner.

He gave it to her, and wiping the tears from her eyes and looking at the column he pointed out, she saw that it was a different newspaper from that which Mr. Beeminster had brought with him. Fred's newspaper contained the simple announcement that Miser Farebrother had been found dead in his grounds at Parksides under such circumstances as would lead to the belief that he had been murdered.

"You do not know the worst," said Aunt Leth; and then, in as calm a voice as she could command, she related what had occurred.

He listened in horror and amazement. Until this moment he had been ignorant of Phœbe's visit to Parksides on the previous night, and of her return to Camden Town at ten o'clock that morning; and he instantly saw that his darling girl was in peril. The name of the paper from which Mr. Beeminster had read the account of the murder was being called in the street by a newspaper boy, and Fred darted out and purchased a copy. After perusing the report he remained quiet for a minute or two, with his head resting in his hand. "We must be calm, Aunt Leth," he said. "There is in this paper the first notes of a terrible accusation against our dear girl. It is due to Mrs. Pamflett's malice. She shall be punished for it—she and her infamous son!"

"You will protect Phœbe!" implored Aunt Leth, laying her hand on Fred's arm. "You will save her!"

"I will protect and save her. My poor Phœbe! my poor Phœbe! But she will be able to clear up the mystery,

although she may not lead us immediately to the discovery of the actual murderer. She can give us an explanation of her own movements. What has she told you, Aunt Leth?"

"I have not got one sensible word from her, Fred, since she came home."

"What does the doctor say?"

"That she must be kept quiet. He is coming again this evening."

"I must see her, if only for a moment. I will not agitate her, but it is imperative that we learn something from her which will enable us to act. Take me to her, Aunt Leth."

Aunt Leth recognized the reasonableness of Fred's request, and she led him upstairs to the bedroom. Fanny was there, her eyes red with weeping.

"Has she spoken, Fanny?" asked Aunt Leth. "Has she said anything?"

"Only one word, mamma. Oh, Fred, isn't this dreadful! There, mamma, that is all she says—'Father! father!'"

"Go out of the room for a little while, Fanny," said Fred

Cornwall. "You can return when we leave." And then to Aunt Leth, when Fanny was gone, "Does Fanny know of Mr. Beeminster's visit?"

"She knows nothing, Fred," replied Aunt Leth.

It required a supreme effort on Fred's part to control his agitation as he gazed upon the white pitiful face of his dear girl. Her body was quite still, but her head tossed from side to side on the pillow, and in her distressful moans there could be distinguished but one word—"Father! father! father!" repeated incessantly.

"Phœbe!" whispered Fred, bending over her.

"She recognizes no one, Fred," whispered Aunt Leth; "not even me or Fanny."

They remained with the suffering girl for a quarter of an hour, and then they stole softly from her bedside and went down-stairs. Fred was very grave; he realized that his dear one was in no light peril.

"Mr. Beeminster set a man to watch the house," said Aunt Leth, pointing to the window.

Fred looked out, and then, saying he would not be gone a minute, left the house.

"There is a man watching also at the back of the house,' he said, when he returned.

"Oh, Fred," cried Aunt Leth, "what does it all really mean?"

"The meaning is clear enough," replied Fred, and the concentrated expression on his face showed how busily his mind was employed; "there has been a suspicion of the horrible crime thrown upon the suffering angel upstairs. If I were only Phœbe's lover, Aunt Leth, I should be in a fury of rage at the wicked accusation; but I am her champion and her defender, and I must keep my feelings well under control, or I shall not be able to serve her. Some devilish plot has been invented, and we must meet it. Phœbe, by her actions last night and this morning, even by the state in which she now lies, unfortunately gives some colour to the vile, infernal accusation. Everything depends upon coolness. Such strange cases are being daily brought to light that the public are ready to believe anything. Now tell me: what was Phœbe's motive in leaving last night for Parksides without first letting you know?"

"I can only guess at it, Fred; but I am sure it is the

truth. We were in the most dreadful trouble—I thought nothing worse could happen to us, but I was mistaken; this is a thousand times more terrible!"

"Don't give way, Aunt Leth. Remember what I said: everything depends upon coolness. I know of your trouble, and that you are, thank God! out of it; it was a money trouble, and the money is paid."

"Yes, Fred; but how did you know?"

"Never mind; go on about Phœbe."

"We were sitting in the dark, talking and mourning over it. My husband was in despair. There was only one way to prevent ruin, and that was to obtain a sum of money at once—it was three hundred pounds, Fred; a fortune—and we saw no way. So we sat talking, and trying to console each other. Suddenly I missed Phœbe; she had left the room so quietly that we did not observe it. A little while afterward 'Melia Jane told us that she had met Phœbe, who had given her a message to us that she had gone to Parkside to see her father. There was but one reason for her doing this; it was to try and obtain the money from her father that would prevent us being turned into the streets.

She must have left us just as my husband was saying that as he walked to the bank he had a dream of hope, and that an angel had come forward to save us. Then, I suppose, the idea occurred to our dear girl to go to her father and entreat him to help us. If she had spoken to me first, I should have convinced her of the impossibility of her errand meeting with success."

"You have placed the right construction upon her leaving unknown to you. She felt that if you suspected her intention she would be unable to carry it out. When you put her to bed this morning did you search her pockets?"

"Yes, Fred; and I hoped to find something that would clear up the mystery. I found nothing."

"You found something," said Fred. "Her handkerchief, her purse?"

"Yes, of course, those; and her gloves."

"She was not wearing them, then?"

"No."

"Was there any money in her purse?"

"Not one penny, Fred."

"I hear 'Melia Jane's step on the stairs; I must have a word with her." He went to the door and called the girl, who entered the room. "I want to ask you a question or two," he said to her. "In answering me do not say a word you are not certain of."

"I won't, Mr. Cornwall," said 'Melia Jane.

"When you met Miss Phœbe last night did she seem very much agitated?"

"Very much, Mr. Cornwall. More nor I can express. She was crying, but she didn't want me to see. She tried to keep her face from me."

"You did not attempt to stop her? You asked her no questions?"

"Lor', Mr. Cornwall, she didn't give me time to get out a single word! She said what she had got to say, and she ran away like lightning."

"Did she wear a veil?"

"Yes, Mr. Cornwall, she did. The veil that man as come 'ere this afternoon showed me, and arksed me whether Miss Phœbe wore it last night when she went away. 'Owever he got 'old of it is more than I can guess."

"When he asked you whether Miss Phœbe wore the veil, what did you say?"

"I sed, yes, she did. And he showed me a brooch, and wanted to git me to say that she wore that last night; but I didn't, because I ain't seen that brooch on Miss Phœbe for a long time."

"You could swear," said Fred, eagerly, "that she did not wear a brooch when you saw her last night?"

"No, Mr. Cornwall, I couldn't swear that. I could swear I didn't see it—that's all. But I could swear to the veil."

Fred bit his lip. "If any man you don't know asks you any further questions about Miss Phœbe, do not answer him."

"I won't, Mr. Cornwall; they sha'n't pump me. That feller tried to, but he didn't git very much."

"He got enough," thought Fred, and said aloud, "That will do, 'Melia Jane; you can go. And now, Aunt Leth, quite apart from the statement which Mrs. Pamflett gave the reporters, it is proved that Phœbe was at Parksides last night. How did she get there?"

"I really can't say, Fred. I think she must have been too late for the last train."

"Have you an 'A B C' in the house?"

"No."

"I must see at what time the last train starts. Do you think she came back to London by the train this morning?"

"I don't know, Fred. Poor child! her feet were very much blistered."

"Good God! Surely she could not have walked!" He paced the room in great excitement. "About the brooch, Aunt Leth? Can you fix any definite time—any particular day—on which you last saw it in Phœbe's possession?"

"No, Fred; but I am sure I haven't seen it for a good many weeks."

"That she has not worn it for a good many weeks?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"You could not swear she has not worn it?"

"No."

"You could not swear she did not wear it last night?"

"No. But it is scarcely likely, with her feelings toward that wretch Mrs. Pamflett, that she would ever wear it after

she was turned out of her father's house. What I am saying seems to trouble you."

"It does trouble me. I pray that I may be wrong in my impressions, but I fear that dark days are before us."

"If we speak the truth, Fred, there is nothing to fear."

"I am not so sure," said Fred, gloomily.

"But we *must* speak the truth, Fred!"

"Yes; it must be spoken—by us at least."

"Your fears may be groundless, Fred."

"I am afraid not."

"All we can do is to hope for the best."

"Not at all, Aunt Leth. What we have to do is to work for the best. Hoping never yet overcame a villainous plot. I must go now. There is much to do. I shall be here again in the evening."

CHAPTER X.

THE INQUEST.

THE following report of the inquest appeared in the special editions of the evening papers on the following evening:

"The inquest upon the body of the gentleman known as 'Miser' Farebrother, who was found dead in the grounds of Parksides, was held in Beddington this morning.

"The coroner, addressing the jury, said that they were about to investigate what there was little reason to doubt was a foul murder. Certain witnesses were present whose evidence would enable them to decide under what circumstances death had taken place. He was informed that one witness was absent whose evidence might have an important bearing upon the inquiry, although it would not probably alter the verdict which would be given. Their first duty was to identify the body of the dead man.

"This being done, the actual inquiry commenced. The

first witness called was Mrs. Deborah Pamflett. Before she was examined, however, Mr. Frederick Cornwall, barrister, rose, and asked to be allowed to say a few words.

"The Coroner: 'Have they any bearing upon this inquiry?'

"Mr. Cornwall: 'A direct bearing. I appear here to watch the case on behalf of the only child of the murdered man, and I request permission to put some questions to the witnesses, if I consider it necessary to do so.'

"The Coroner: 'I shall have no objection to pertinent questions being put to the witnesses, but it must be done through me.'

"Mr. Cornwall: 'I thank you, sir. You have referred to the absence of a witness whose evidence would be likely to have an important bearing upon this inquiry. I assume that the witness referred to is the lady I represent. An unhappy circumstance prevents her attendance. I hand you a certificate, signed by two doctors, to the effect that Miss Farebrother is suffering from brain-fever, and that she is not in a fit state to be removed from the house in which she is lying, or to be examined either there or here. Were she

well enough she would be present on this occasion, painful as it would be to her.'

"The Coroner: 'In whose house is Miss Farebrother being nursed?'

"Mr. Cornwall: 'In her aunt's house in Camden Town. You will find the exact address on the certificate.'

"The certificate was handed in, and the examination of Mrs. Pamflett was proceeded with.

"'Your name is Deborah Pamflett?'—'Yes.'

"'You are a widow?'—'Yes.'

"'In the service of the deceased?'—'Yes.'

"'In what capacity?'—'As his house-keeper.'

"'How long have you been so employed?'—'Eighteen years.'

"'Were there any other servants in the house?'—'None.'

"'Not at any time during your service?'—'Not at any time.'

"'Of how many persons did the household of the deceased consist?'—'Usually of three—himself, his daughter and me.'

"'Why do you say usually?'—'Because his daughter

was frequently absent on visits to her aunt and uncle, in London.'

"'Was she absent on the day of the death of your master?'—'She had been absent from the house for some weeks, but on the night my master met his death she was present.'

"'Relate the occurrences of that day, as far as your memory will serve you.'—'My memory is pretty faithful. My master rose at his usual hour, and the day passed quietly. He received one visitor in the afternoon—my son, who managed his business for him in London, and who, I believe, will be examined here. Before my son arrived my master sent me to the telegraph office with a message to him, asking him to come upon business. My son, however, anticipated the message, and alighted from the train just as I sent off the message. He met me in the village, and we walked to Parksides together. When I went to my master and told him that my son had arrived, he expressed himself as being very pleased. Between my master and my son the most friendly and cordial relations existed; they never had a word of difference. This made my own

service in the house very pleasant, so far as my master was concerned. I was present during some portion of the time my son was with our master, who spoke in great praise of the way my son was conducting the London business. They had tea together in my master's room, and after that my son left for London.'

"'At what hour did he leave?'—'At about seven o'clock. I did not take particular note of the time, there being no occasion for it, but that was about the hour, within a few minutes one way or another. At eight o'clock my master rang the bell for me, and I went up to him. I was in the habit of sitting with him often when there was no one else in the house, and sometimes of reading the paper to him. He was very lonely, and very much troubled and unhappy about his daughter.'

"Mr. Cornwall (rising): 'I submit, sir, that these observations do not come within the scope of the present inquiry.'

"The Coroner: 'I think the witness is giving her evidence fairly. It will, however, be as well that she should confine herself as much as possible to facts.'

"Witness: 'I am stating facts, sir.'

"The Coroner: 'I mean facts relating to the death of the deceased. It is sufficient, perhaps, at present to know that there was some disturbance of those affectionate relations which should exist between father and daughter.' To witness: 'Under what circumstances did Miss Farebrother, on the last occasion, leave her father's house? I must request you not to interrupt the proceedings, Mr. Cornwall. You are here only upon courtesy.'

"Mr. Cornwall: I might contest that, sir; but I will interrupt as little as possible.'

"The Coroner (to witness): 'Answer my question.'—'I do not know the precise circumstances, sir. All I know is that they had a violent quarrel late at night, and that Miss Farebrother left against her father's wish, and without his consent. After her departure he was very unhappy, and shed tears.'

"The Coroner: 'Proceed now with the events of the day you are describing.'—'I sat with my master till ten o'clock, and then there was a ring at the gate bell. My master said it was a visitor he was expecting, and I went

down and admitted him. I do not know his name, but for the last three or four years he came perhaps four or five times a year—always at night—and he and my master would be closeted together for two or three hours. On this occasion that he was with my master I went down to the kitchen, and did my work there. I put everything in order, and saw that the things were in their right places. Among other things, the knives, which I kept in the dresser drawer.'

"'Have you any reason for particularly mentioning the knives?'—'Yes, sir. Among them was a large knife with a horn handle, which I had recently sharpened. My work being finished, I went up to my bedroom, stopping on my way outside my master's door, and asking him whether he wanted anything. He answered no, and that I was to get to bed. It was his usual answer, and I obeyed him; there was nothing to excite my suspicions. At a little after eleven I was in bed and asleep. I slept for over two hours, and then I awoke. Sounds in the lower part of the house had roused me. I listened, and heard some one moving about. Lighting a candle, I looked at my watch.

It was twenty minutes past one. I was not easy in my mind, and I went down-stairs. I listened a moment at my master's door, but all was still in the room. There was a light there, however, and I knocked softly. I got no answer, and I gently tried the handle; the door was unlocked, and I took a step into the room. There was no one there but my master, and he was asleep in his chair. He sometimes slept so for a few hours; he suffered greatly from gout and rheumatism, and he has said to me that he felt easier in that position than in bed. I closed the door quietly and went down to the kitchen, and there, to my astonishment, I saw Miss Farebrother. She had a knife in her hand, the knife with a horn handle, and she put it hastily on the table as I entered. The drawer in which I kept my knives was open; when I went to bed I left it closed. Miss Farebrother was very angry at my making my appearance, and she asked me how I dared to play the spy upon her. I told her that I was not playing the spy, and that I had been disturbed in my sleep by a noise in the house, and I came down to see what it was. I said something, too, about how astonishing it was that she

should come home at such an hour, and she replied that it was no business of mine, and that I was to go to my room at once, or she would have me bundled out of the house the first thing in the morning. It was no use answering her; she was my mistress, and I had to obey her; so I went up to my room again. I can't exactly say how long it was afterward, but it could not have been very long—perhaps half an hour or three-quarters, bringing the time to past two o'clock—that I heard the voices of my master and his daughter outside the house. Whether she had gone up to him and woke him, or whether he had gone out, as he sometimes did in the middle of the night, I don't know, but at the time I heard them they were in the grounds. They both seemed to be very angry. Miss Farebrother, as well as I could make out, was insisting that her father should give her a sum of money, and she was using threats toward him. Presently he spoke in a more gentle tone to her, and I heard him say, "Wait till I am dead and it will all be yours, if you will come back and behave as a dutiful and affectionate daughter to me." And I heard her answer: "I will do as I please and go where I please. You

ought to have been dead long ago! You had better be careful!" After that the voices grew fainter and fainter, as if they were moving away.'

"The Coroner: 'Hearing what you did, why did you not go down to them?'—'I did not like to; and, to tell the truth, it would have been as much as my situation was worth to interfere. They had often quarrelled like that, though not in the exact words I heard then; and twice, some time ago, when I did interfere, I was sent away, and told not to mix myself up with family quarrels.'

"'Who used these words to you?'—'Principally Miss Farebrother; but my master also said, very sorrowfully, that I had better never trouble myself, and that my interference would only make things worse.'

"'Had they ever quarrelled in the middle of the night before?'—'Yes; and she was continually threatening him, so that there was nothing very unusual in this quarrel, although it was as bad as any that ever reached my ears.'

"'When you could no longer hear them, did you fall asleep?'—'Not immediately; perhaps not for half an hour; I can't be sure.'

"'Did you hear them return to the house?'—'I heard nothing more of them.'

"'Well, then, you fell asleep. At what hour in the morning did you awake?'—'At a little before seven—my usual time. By seven o'clock I was in the kitchen, going on with my work.'

"'Did you observe anything particular in the kitchen?' 'Nothing particular. Things were pretty much as I had left them on the night before.

"'The drawer in which you kept your knives—was it closed?'—'Yes, it was closed.'

"'The knife with the horn handle—where was that?'—'I did not know. I had no occasion to use it, and I did not look for it.'

"'At what time in the morning did the deceased usually ring his bell for you?'—'At nine o'clock or thereabouts; but there were exceptions, and when nine o'clock passed and I was not summoned, I did not attach any importance to it.'

"'You supposed Miss Farebrother to be in the house?' —'Oh yes; but I did not expect to hear her bell for a long

time. She generally slept till ten or eleven o'clock. I waited till half-past ten, and then, being uneasy at not hearing my master's bell, I went to his room, and as there was no answer to my knock, I opened the door. My master was not there, and the bed had not been slept in. Then I went to Miss Farebrother's room, and she was not there, and she had not slept in her bed. I became frightened, and I thought I would look about the grounds. It was then that I discovered my master lying dead, with blood upon him, and the knife with the horn handle lying near him, with clotted blood on it. I flew to the village for assistance, and some people came back with me, and said that my master had been murdered.'

"'How far from the house is the spot upon which you discovered the body of the deceased?'—'I cannot say. Perhaps a quarter of a mile.'

"'Could you, being in the house, have heard any sounds proceeding from that spot?'—'It would be almost, if not quite, impossible.'

"'So that if there had been any cries for help, they would not have reached your ears?'—'No, they could not.'

"'Now, did you observe anything particular about Miss Farebrother's dress when you found her in the kitchen so late at night?'—'She was dressed as she usually was.'

"'Fully dressed?'—'Yes.'

"'Did she wear a hat?'—'Yes.'

"'With a veil to it?'—'Yes, there was a veil to it.'

"'Would you be able to recognize the veil?'—'Yes.'

"'Is this it?' (Veil produced.)—'Yes, this is it.'

"'Did she wear any ornaments?'—'I noticed only one, and I should not have noticed that if I had not presented it to her as a birthday gift.'

"'What was the ornament?'—'A brooch.'

"'Can you identify it?'—'Oh yes; it is a very particular brooch. My mother had it before me.'

"'Is this it?'—'Yes, this is it.'

"'That is all I have to ask you.'—'Thank you, sir.'

"Mr. Cornwall: 'A moment, please.'

"The Coroner: 'You understand, Mr. Cornwall, that I shall check you if you ask any questions irrelevant to this inquiry?'

"Mr. Cornwall: 'I quite understand it, sir.' To witness:

'Are you positive that your memory is faithful upon all the events you have described?'—'I am very positive, sir.'

"As to what took place between you and Miss Farebrother in the kitchen?'—'Everything is as I had described.'

"'The conversation between you?'—'Yes, sir.'

"'And the knife with the horn handle?'—'It is as I have said, sir.'

"'You swear that Miss Farebrother frequently threatened her father?'—'Frequently, sir, I am sorry to say.'

"'Did you ever mention this continual disagreement to any person?'—'No, sir, except to my son. I have no acquaintances.'

"'Not one?'—'Not one.'

"The Coroner: 'In this place, Mr. Cornwall, these questions do not appear to me to be pertinent. Some are repetitions of questions already asked and answered, others do not affect the particular inquiry upon which we are engaged.'

"Mr. Cornwall: 'I am sorry to hear that expression of opinion from you, for there is to me, and doubtless to

others, something like a direct accusation in the witness's evidence.'

"Witness (in a quiet tone): 'I do not accuse any one. I am speaking the truth.'

"Mr. Cornwall: 'Then it is the truth, and you swear it, that when you last saw Miss Farebrother she wore the brooch which you gave her as a birthday gift?'—'It is the truth, and I swear it.'

"'Can you describe the man who visited the deceased on the night of his death?'—'I can, sir.'

"The Coroner: 'It is a proper question, and it should have been asked. I should doubtless have recalled the witness to answer it.'

"Witness: 'He is a man not much taller than I am. I am above the usual height of a woman. His face is dark; he has a large mouth and a small nose; his eyes are blue.'

"'How dressed?'—'In a dark tweed suit.'

"'Wearing any jewellery?'—'A silver chain and a large diamond ring.'

"'They scarcely match. The man who can afford to wear a large diamond would be likely to wear a gold chain.'

—'I don't know about that. The diamond may not be genuine.'

"'About what age would you suppose?'—'About forty.'

"The next witness called was Dr. Playfellow. He deposed that the deceased had met his death by violence. It was caused by the wound in his breast, inflicted by precisely such a weapon as the knife with the horn handle. Asked whether the deceased might not have stabbed himself, Dr. Playfellow said that from the direction of the wound and the position in which the body was found, it was impossible that death could have been inflicted by his own hands.

"Jeremiah Pamflett was next examined. He is the son of the murdered man's house-keeper, and he testified that he had been in the employment of the deceased since he was a lad, and that he had risen from the position of a petty clerk to that of sole manager of Miser Farebrother's business. Between him and his master the most perfect harmony existed; they had never had a word of difference, and his master reposed complete confidence in him. On the afternoon before his master's death he went to Park-

sides to submit certain accounts to Miser Farebrother, anticipating the telegram which was sent to him requesting him to come. The deceased expressed great satisfaction at his attention to business, and in the course of the interview informed the witness that it was his intention to admit him as a partner. He, the witness, left Parksides in a very happy frame of mind at this promised reward of his long and faithful service. Miser Farebrother was a kind and liberal master; the witness declared he could not desire a better.

"A Juryman: 'You say he was a kind master. Was he in other respects a kind man?'—'Very kind and considerate; he deserved greater happiness than he enjoyed.'

"Being asked to explain the meaning of this statement, the witness exhibited a reluctance to reply, and said he was sorry he had let the words slip. He was, however, pressed to explain, and he then said that the deceased was made very unhappy by the want of affection shown to him by his daughter.

"The Juryman: 'Was he kind to his daughter?'—'Very kind.'

"'Was there any disagreement between them?'—'There was continual disagreement; but it was not my master's fault. He did all he could to please her.'

"'Do you know the cause of this disagreement?'—'It was partly about money.'

"'That she asked for, and that he would not give?'—'Yes.'

"'But you said he was very kind to her. The deceased was a man of means. Why should he refuse to give his daughter money?'—'From what my master said to me at different times, it was because she demanded sums of money for purposes of which he did not approve. He was exceedingly liberal to her where she herself was concerned; but he objected to his money being given to persons who hated him.'

"'To what persons do you refer?'—'To her relatives in London—the only relatives she has.'

"'What is the name of these relatives?'—'Lethbridge They live in Camden Town.'

"'And Miss Farebrother wanted money for them?'—

'According to what my master said, she was always wanting money for them.'

"'Was she in the habit of visiting them?'—'Continually.'

"'With the consent of the deceased?'—'Against his consent. He frequently remonstrated with her for paying long visits to persons who bore him such ill-will.'

"'In spite of these remonstrances she continued to visit them?'—'Yes.'

"'Mention has been made of a man who was in the habit of visiting the deceased in his home at Parksides late at night. Do you know anything of him?'—'Nothing, except what my mother has told me and has told you.'

"'Did he not visit the office in London?'—'No. I never saw him.'

"'Did no conversation ever pass between you and the deceased respecting him?'—'None.'

"'Then you do not know upon what business he came?'—'No; but it could not have been upon the affairs of the London business, or I should have heard it.'

The only questions put to this witness by Mr. Cornwall were these :

"'By what train did you leave for London on the occasion of your last visit to the deceased?'—'By the 8.12.'

"'Did you go direct to the office when you reached London?'—'Yes.'

"'At what time did you arrive at the office?'—'At about ten o'clock.'

"'You sleep there?'—'Yes.'

"The next witness called was Mrs. Lethbridge, whose evidence was to the following effect :

"'You are a relative of the deceased?'—'I am his sister-in-law.'

"'Were you upon friendly terms with him?'—'No.'

"'Nor any of your family?'—'No. But we are not to blame for that.'

"'Was his daughter in the habit of visiting your house?'—'Yes.'

"'Frequently?'—'Frequently.'

"'And of remaining there for any length of time?'—'Yes; generally for three or four days.'

"'Your intimacy with her, then, was of a thoroughly friendly nature?'—'Of a most affectionate nature. I love her as a child of my own.'

"'Was that the sentiment of all your family?'—'Yes.'

"'Were Miss Farebrother's visits to your house paid with the consent of the deceased?'—'Yes.'

"'Did you learn this from him?'—'No. We very seldom saw him.'

"'In point of fact, how many times have you or any of your family seen him, say within these eight or nine years?'—'Only twice.'

"'Where? At your house in London?'—'No; at his house in Parksides?'

"'At his invitation?'—'No. The first time we were asked by his daughter. It was her birthday, but we understood that our visit would be agreeable to him.'

"'You understood. From whom?'—'From my niece.'

"'On that occasion how long were you at Parksides?'—'For five or six hours.'

"'Did you and your family partake of any meal there?'—'We had tea?'

"'Was the deceased present at the table?'—'No; he sent word that he was not well enough to join us.'

"'Was your second visit paid upon his invitation?'—'No; we went of our own accord.'

"'Who went?'—'I, my niece, and Mr. Cornwall.'

"'Is Mr. Cornwall the gentleman who represents Miss Farebrother at this inquest.'—'Yes.'

"'Why did he accompany you?'—'Must I answer?'

"'It is at your own discretion. I cannot compel you?'

"Mr. Cornwall: 'Answer the question, Mrs. Lethbridge.'

"Witness: 'Mr. Cornwall had proposed to my niece, and he accompanied us for the purpose of asking Mr. Farebrother's consent to the engagement.'

"'Was that consent given?'—'No.'

"'Did the deceased turn you and Mr. Cornwall from his house?'—'Yes.'

"'In the question I am about to ask you I will not confine myself to the last eight or nine years. I will go as far back as the birth of the deceased's daughter, who is now of a marriageable age. During this long period did the deceased ever visit your house?'—'No.'

"'Not once?'—'Not once.'

"'Did he correspond with you, or you with him?'—'No.'

"'Not a letter, then, passed between you?'—'Not a letter.'

"'Nor a direct communication of any kind? You hesitate!'—'I was considering. There was one letter.'

"'Written and sent by you or the deceased?'—'By Mr. Farebrother. It was a great many years ago. My niece then was scarcely two years of age, and her poor mother was dying. She wished to see me before she died, and it was at her direction that her husband wrote to me.'

"'It appears that even previous to that time you were not upon friendly terms with him?'—'It was so, unhappily.'

"'Did you comply with the request contained in that letter?'—'Yes; and I saw my sister. I was with her when she died, and I promised to look after her child and to love her as my own.'

"'I wish you to understand that it is entirely at your discretion whether you reply to certain of my questions. On that visit, so long ago, did you gather the impression

that the deceased was glad to see you—that you were, in fact, welcome in his house?'—'I must speak the truth. He was not glad to see me; I was not welcome.'

"'We can, therefore, arrive but at one conclusion—that there existed an absolute and distinct antipathy on one side or both. I come now to the night upon which the deceased met his death. Your niece was living with you then?'—'Yes.'

"'I will not inquire into the circumstances of her taking up her residence with you when her father's home was open to her.'—'It was not open to her.'

"'You say that? Not under any conditions? Had he positively refused ever to receive her again as a daughter?'—'Unless under conditions which were repugnant to her.'

"'Then her father's home *was* open to her if she were prepared to behave dutifully, and to obey him?'—'I cannot deny that; but as I have said, his conditions were repugnant to her.'

"'Into those domestic matters it is not our business to inquire. A few hours before her father was murdered she left your house?'—'She did.'

"'With your knowledge?'—'Without my knowledge.'

"'How did you become acquainted with her movements?'—'She met our servant, and desired her to give us a message that she was going to Parksides to see her father.'

"'It was a strange hour for her to leave. Did she return to your house on that night?'—'No.'

"'The next morning?'—'Yes.'

"'At what time?'—'At about ten o'clock.'

"'Did she give you any explanation of her movements?'—'She could not do so. She was in a state of exhaustion and was very ill.'

"'What was the nature of her illness?'—'She was delirious.'

"'We have a certificate that she has brain fever.'—'It is unhappily true.'

"'Do you recognize this veil?' (Veil produced.)—'It is one my niece wore.'

"'On that night?'—'I cannot positively say, but it is hers.'

"'Do you recognize this brooch?'—'I have seen it,

but I do not think it has been in her possession for some weeks.'

"'Can you swear to that?'—'No, I cannot swear to it.'

"'When she returned home, did it strike you that she must have experienced some excitement?'—'Yes.'

"'Some very strong excitement?'—'Yes.'

"'And she gave you no explanation of it?'—'She could not, because of her condition.'

"Mr. Cornwall asked no questions of this witness, who several times in the course of the examination was much agitated.

"Witnesses were called who proved that the veil and the brooch were found near the body of the murdered man.

"The coroner having addressed the jury, they considered their verdict, which was that Miser Farebrother had been murdered by some person or persons unknown.

"We understand that a warrant has been issued for the arrest of Phœbe Farebrother on the charge of murdering her father, Miser Farebrother."

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIAL AND VERDICT—EXTRACTED FROM A POPULAR DAILY PAPER.

"THE trial of Phœbe Farebrother for the murder of her father, commonly known as Miser Farebrother, terminated last evening, and will be long remembered as one of the most remarkable and painful in criminal records. The extraordinary interest exhibited by the public in the case is only partially due to the murder itself and to the relations which existed between the unhappy prisoner and the deceased; chiefly it may be set down to the youth and beauty of the young woman who was accused of a crime so horrible and atrocious. As she stood in the dock it was almost impossible to believe that a being so lovely and gentle could harbour a thought that was not innocent and pure, and the demeanour of those who were present at the trial was sufficient to prove that popular sympathy was enlisted on her

side. Fitting it is—and especially fitting in this case—that justice should be blind.

"Now that the trial is over, the verdict given, and the sentence pronounced, we propose to devote some brief attention to those features in it which rendered it remarkable. The case is one of circumstantial evidence, and turned no less upon the statements of those who testified uncompromisingly against the prisoner than upon the statements of her friends, whose sorrowful evidence weighed heavily against her.

"The household of Miser Farebrother, in the lifetime of the unfortunate man, was eminently cold and cheerless. Love occupied no place therein. A man of wealth and means, all the avenues of enjoyment were open to him, but he cared only for the accumulation of money. This may be said to have been his one object, and he devoted to it all his energies. An attempt was made to prove that he was of an affectionate and tender nature, and that his behaviour toward his child was that of a loving father, but this view of his character may be unhesitatingly dismissed. It renders the crime no less

visitors, and neither dispensed nor accepted hospitality of any kind; his child had no child companions, and between her and her father's servants existed a feeling of strong antipathy; he made no effort to provide her with any sort of education; in the great house they occupied the light of home never shone. His daughter, however, was not entirely without friends. Her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Lethbridge, and their two children, lived in London, and for some years past Phœbe Farebrother has been in the habit of visiting their house, and of participating, through them, in ordinary and moderate enjoyments. We may at once admit that the character borne by Mr. and Mrs. Lethbridge is unimpeachable—and this, despite the evidence given by Mrs. Pamflett and her son, in which may be discerned a distinct bias against them as designing persons, whose aim was to extort money from the murdered man. No direct testimony to the establishment of this view is forthcoming, and the general repute of the Lethbridges is a contradiction of it. A feeling of bitterness appears to have existed for years between these parties; on one side, Miser Farebrother and Mrs. and Jeremiah Pamflett; on the

other, Miser Farebrother's unhappy daughter and her relatives in London. This was the state of affairs when Phœbe Farebrother, a few weeks before her father's death, left his house, and found her way to her aunt's home in London, where she was received with open arms.

"There are side issues to which we do not intend to refer at any length; these issues relate to Miser Farebrother's desire that his daughter should marry a man of his choosing, and to her having already set her affections upon a man of whom her father did not approve. In connection with these opposing desires is an incident which will presently be mentioned.

"It has been elicited that on the night of Miser Farebrother's murder, and for some time previous, the Lethbridges were in pecuniary difficulties, to extricate them from which a sum of money was immediately required. A puzzling feature in the whole of this sad case is the absolute frankness which the Lethbridges have displayed as to their position and the movements of the prisoner up to the hour when the warrant for her arrest was issued. So far as can be seen there has been no concealment whatever of any-

thing within their knowledge, and this is the more strange because much of their evidence told directly against the prisoner.

"There seemed to be only one way of obtaining the money required to extricate the Lethbridges from their difficulties, and that was by a successful application to Miser Farebrother. There is no evidence that they asked their niece to appeal to her father in their behalf; they positively deny having done so, and she herself says that no word fell from their lips to that effect. When she left their house in London with the intention of proceeding to Parksides, she did so without their knowledge. There can be no doubt that she was actuated by a wish to help them. From the moment she left them until she returned the next morning in a state of prostration, physically and mentally, they are in darkness as to what occurred, and can throw no light whatever upon her movements. During that night Miser Farebrother met his death. At the trial three articles were brought in evidence against the prisoner. The first is a brooch presented to her on her last birthday by Mrs. Pamflett. This brooch was found in the grounds of Park-

sides, near to the body of the murdered man. There is conflicting testimony upon the subject of this brooch. Mr. and Mrs. Lethbridge and their daughter, Miss Fanny Lethbridge, have no recollection of having seen the brooch from the time the prisoner left Parksides to take up her residence with them. They cannot swear that on the fatal night she did not wear it; but Miss Lethbridge is positive that her cousin did not bring it with her from Parksides. The two young women slept together, and not a word passed between them with respect to this ornament. Miss Lethbridge's statement, therefore, is based upon an assumption. The prisoner avers that when she quitted her father's house she did not take the brooch with her. On the other hand, Mrs. Pamflett swears positively that the prisoner did take it away with her. The house-keeper made repeated examinations of the room in Parksides in which the prisoner slept, and never saw the brooch after she left. Here, then, we have a positive oath against a vague assumption, and this sworn evidence is strengthened by the fact of the brooch having been found close to the body of her master. If the prisoner did not wear it on the

night of the murder, how could it have got into the grounds?

"The second article brought in evidence against the prisoner is her veil. Here there is no conflicting testimony. The prisoner admits having worn the veil when she went to Parksides, and this veil was also found in the grounds close to the body.

"The third article is the prisoner's handkerchief, which her aunt took from her pocket when she returned in the morning. There were stains of blood upon the handkerchief, which the prosecution declares was the blood of the murdered man. The prisoner declares that the blood proceeded from scratches she received by stumbling in the dark against fences and coming in contact with the branches of trees. That she did sustain some such slight wounds is undoubtedly true; and although the weight of conflicting evidence as to the blood-stains on the handkerchief is about equal, the theory of the prosecution is strengthened by independent circumstances in connection with the murder.

"What Mrs. Pamflett knows of the strange and sudden

visit of the prisoner to Parksides at midnight need not here be recapitulated. Her evidence has been printed in our columns on three occasions: first when the inquest on the body was held; again, when the prisoner was brought before the magistrate and committed for trial; and again, at greater length, during the trial just ended. What passed between her and the prisoner, the incident of the knife with the horn handle with which the deed was done, the high words in the grounds between the prisoner and her father, especially those uttered by the prisoner: 'I will do as I please, and go where I please. You ought to have been dead long ago! You had better be careful!'—all this has been fully reported. The visit of a strange man to Miser Farebrother on this night is still a mystery. It was hoped by the prosecution that the endeavour to trace this man would have been successful, or that he himself would have voluntarily come forward to give evidence, but the hope has not been fulfilled. He remains in hiding, and will probably so continue to remain. The theory of the prosecution is a feasible one—that this man's visits to Miser Farebrother being paid in secret, his business was of a questionable

nature, the revealment of which would bring him into trouble. Great care and caution were always displayed on the occasion of these visits, and the minute description of his dress and appearance given by Mrs. Pamflett is of little value, in the absence of any other evidence respecting him, so long as he chooses to remain hidden.

"The prisoner's statement as to what occurred, so far as she can remember, from the time she left her aunt's house in London on the night of the murder to the hour she returned to it on the following morning, is as follows:

"She admits that when she went away, unknown to her relatives, she did so with the purpose of going to Parksides and appealing to her father to give her a sum of money which would extricate the Lethbridges from their difficulties. 'Had I told them what was in my mind,' she says, 'they would have prevented me from leaving them, having no hope that my errand would be successful. But I had thought of a plan by which I could induce my father to comply with my request. I did not dare to mention this plan to my aunt, because it would only have strengthened her opposition to my project.' She thus explains the nature

of this plan: Between her and her father were two causes of disagreement. The first was her intimacy with the Lethbridges. He disapproved of it, and wished her to discontinue her visits, and to have nothing more to do with them. To this she was now ready to agree if he would advance her the money she asked for. 'I could not promise to forget them,' she says; 'that would have been impossible—my love for them was so great, and also my gratitude for the kindness and affection they showed me from the time my mother died. But I would have borne my suffering in secret, and would never have spoken of it reproachfully to my father. I should have been only too thankful if he would have assisted me to repay them, in some small measure, for all their wonderful kindness to me. They have made great sacrifices for me. Should I hesitate to make a sacrifice for them in return? It was only my own happiness that was at stake, and perhaps death would have soon come to me to put an end to my misery. There was a time when I used to pray for death.' This, however, was not the only sacrifice she avers she was ready to make; there was another of an infinitely graver nature. Her father

wished her to marry a man she abhorred. She had shrunk in horror from the proposal, but she was ready to submit to it now. She would humble herself to her father's will. Her father had written these words to her, 'When you are prepared to obey me in the one wish of my life, you can come to me; not until then.' Upon these words she was prepared to act. She would go to him and say that she was ready to obey him if he would assist her in the way she wished. Animated by this resolve—which, if it were the truth, would have been most noble and heroic—she took the last train to Beddington, and arrived at Parksides late in the night. She did not take a return ticket, not having sufficient money to pay for it. She cannot fix the hour of her arrival, nor indeed has she anything to say as to time. It may have been midnight, it may have been earlier or later—her mind is a blank upon this. The night, she says, was dark, and the house itself was in darkness; she saw no one moving, inside or out. She was afraid to knock, because her summons would have brought Mrs. Pamflett down, and she feared that the house-keeper, who hated her, would have driven her from the place, and prevented her

from seeing her father. So she concealed herself in the grounds quite near to the house, her intention being to pass the night in the open, and the first thing in the morning, when the door was unlocked, to enter it and go straight to her father's room, unknown to Mrs. Pamflett, and tell him what she came for. We now take up her own words as to what followed:

"'I do not know how long I waited outside, crouching down in concealment; it seemed to me very, very long, and I was so agitated that I cannot depend upon my memory. I did my best to keep my eyes open, but they would close in spite of me, and at last I must have fallen asleep. When I opened my eyes it was with an impression that some one was standing over me, and seeing no one as I looked up, I thought that I must have been mistaken; and yet I could not shake off the idea that some person had been near me. I was very frightened and very confused, and I made up my mind not to close my eyes again, but to wait till daybreak. I did not have to wait so long. In the distance I saw a light, the light of a lantern, moving slowly on. I was overcome with gratitude at the thought that it might be my

father, and that I might speak to him at once. I knew that my father sometimes went out into the grounds at night, but I was not aware for what purpose. I rose to my feet, and softly followed the light till I was sure it was held by my father. Then I went up and spoke to him. I cannot recall what I said, or in what way he answered me. I know that he was at first surprised that I should come to him at so strange an hour, and that, when he got over his surprise, he was in a furious passion. I know, although he continually interrupted me, that I must have succeeded in making him understand why I had presented myself to him. I know that he threatened me and spoke most bitter words, and that he said I had come too late, that he had no longer a child; that every one in the world was his enemy, and was conspiring to ruin him, and that he would drive me from his gates. I have a remembrance of pleading to him, of going on my knees to him, and that he dragged me to my feet, and threw me violently off. I fell fainting to the ground, and remember nothing more of him. When I recovered I was alone, and it was still dark. Heart-broken, bewildered, and sick, and scarcely knowing what I was

doing, I dragged myself away from Parksides, and there was no light in the sky when I left Parksides behind me. It is useless for me to attempt to describe what followed. I must have known the direction to London, and my idea was to get back to my dear aunt, and at the same time to conceal myself from the sight of every one on the road. Whether I succeeded or not I cannot say, and it was only by God's mercy that I reached my aunt's house. There is something so horrible in the accusation that is brought against me that I cannot realize it. I can only pray to God to bring the truth to light!'

"There is in this statement an element of romance and improbability which renders it impossible of belief, especially when it is placed side by side with established evidence. The prisoner refers to a letter she received from her father, in which he says that when she is prepared to obey him she can return to her proper home. But that letter also contains the words: 'Your guilty desires can only be accomplished by my death.'

"We come now to the evidence of another witness, the policeman Tom Barley, which told fatally against the pri-

soner; which perhaps turned the scale against her, and dispelled any doubts which the jury might have entertained. This man, who receives from his superiors a character in every way satisfactory and honourable, was a servant in Miser Farebrother's house during the childhood of the prisoner. His devotion to the prisoner cannot be doubted; his belief in her innocence is not to be shaken, and yet he gave fatal evidence against her. We append here a résumé of the evidence to which we allude, leading up to it by a few questions put to other witnesses, all of them friends of the prisoner.

"Mrs. Lethbridge is examined:

"'On the day the prisoner left your house secretly for Parksides, what was the colour of her dress?'—'Blue.'

"'Did she wear it the whole of the day?'—'Yes.'

"'In the evening, when you and your family were sitting at home, the prisoner being with you, had she this blue dress on?'—'Yes.'

"'Did she change it at all during the day or night?'—'No.'

"'You are positive she left your house wearing this blue dress?'—'I am positive.'

"Miss Fanny Lethbridge, the prisoner's cousin, is examined:

"'Do you remember the dress the prisoner wore on the night she left your parents' house for Parksides?'—'Yes.'

"'What was its colour?'—'Blue. It is her favourite colour.'

"'You have no doubt in your mind that her dress was blue?'—'No.'

"'Could she have changed it unknown to you?'—'No; she had only one other dress, a grey one, and that was hanging up in our room.'

"'Melia Jane, maid of all work in Mrs. Lethbridge's house, is examined:

"'You met the prisoner shortly after she left your mistress's house on the night her father was murdered?'—'Yes.'

"'She gave you a message to deliver to your mistress?'—'Yes; she said she was going to Parksides to see her father.'

"'Did you notice the dress she was wearing?'—'I saw it.'

"'What dress was it?'—'Her favourite frock, a blue one.'

"'Is there any doubt in your mind upon the point?'—'None at all. She had her blue frock on.'

Tom Barley is examined:

"'You were in the service of the murdered man?'—'For many a long year. My grandfather and grandmother were care-takers there before Miser Farebrother took possession.'

"'Answer only the questions that are put to you. What age was the prisoner when you entered her father's service?'—'Miss Phœbe couldn't have been more than two. I was there when she first came.'

"'You were previously engaged, then?'—'Yes; at twopence a week, and I never got more.'

"'What inducement was there for you to remain?'—'Well, I grew up there, so to speak; and I couldn't bear the thought of leaving Miss Phœbe.'

"'The prisoner?'—'Yes.'

"'To serve her was a pleasing duty?'—'I would die for her.'

"'If it were in your power you would testify in her favour?'—'I should be sorry to say a word against her.'

"'But you would tell the truth?'—'I must.'

"'Were you as much attached to your master?'—'No. If he was alive I would tell you what I thought of him.'

"'But being dead you say nothing?'—'It's more decent.'

"'Apart from their relationship as father and child, what kind of feeling existed between them?'—'He had no feeling for her; he hardly took notice of her. She would have loved him if he'd have let her; but he had other notions.'

"'You left his service less than a year ago?'—'Yes. I'll tell you the reason of it.'

"'We do not want to know the reason. Do you remember the night of the murder of Miser Farebrother?'—'Yes.'

"'On that night did you go to Mrs. Lethbridge's house?'—'Yes.'

"'After or before the prisoner left it?'—'After Miss Phœbe left.'

"'Were you spoken to about her having gone away?'—'Yes.'

"'By whom?'—'By Mrs. Lethbridge.'

"'What did she say to you?'—'That Miss Phœbe, without asking her advice, had gone to Parksides, and would I go after her and see that she would come to no harm.'

"'Was there any fear of her coming to harm in her father's house?'—'A good deal. She wasn't safe there.'

"'That is your opinion?'—'Yes, it's my opinion, and the truth.'

"'You went?'—'Yes. I had time, without interfering with my duty.'

"'You were glad to go?'—'I was glad to do anything to serve Miss Phœbe.'

"'Did you go by the train?'—'I was too late for trains; I walked.'

"'A tiring walk?'—'Not for me. I shouldn't think anything of forty mile.'

"'What did you do when you arrived at Parksides?'—'I looked about for Miss Phœbe.'

"'Did you see her?'—'No.'

"'Did you remain there for any length of time?'—'Up to the last safe minute. I had to get back to London to my duty by a certain time.'

"'I understand, then, that you remained until the last safe minute?'—'Yes.'

"'When you left Parksides, was it night or morning?'—'Morning. The sun was rising.'

"'You could distinguish objects perfectly?'—'Yes.'

"'Did you walk about Parksides freely? Was there any restraint upon your movements?'—'I don't know about restraints. It is the truth that I did not wish to be seen.'

"'Why?'—'There was no love lost between me and Miser Farebrother. He wouldn't have been pleased to see me.'

"'You knew you had no right to be there?'—'I was doing no harm, and had no intention of doing any. I wanted to be of service to Miss Phœbe.'

"'You were, however, careful in your movements?'—'Yes.'

"'Now, you say it was sunrise when you left?'—'It was.'

"'And that you could see clearly?'—'Yes.'

"'Is your eyesight good?'—'Very good. I can almost see in the dark.'

"'But you could not distinguish colours in the dark?'—'I don't say I could. At all events, I wouldn't swear to them.'

"'You have stated that you did not see the prisoner. But did you see any one you knew?'—'It's hard to answer.'

"'Not at all. You must be able to state whether you saw anything, before you left Parksides, that attracted your attention.'—'I am able to state that, but I answer your questions as you put them to me.'

"'And I do not complain of your answers. I am pleased to say that you are giving your evidence in a perfectly straightforward manner.'—'Thank you, sir.'

"'Well, then, you say you did not see any one whom you knew; but did you see any one at all?'—'Yes, I did. A woman.'

"'How do you know it was a woman?'—'By her dress.'

"'You saw that?'—'Clearly.'

"'I wish to lead up intelligibly and distinctly to this, and I am sure you will assist me—your desire being that justice shall be done?'—'It is my desire, sir; then everything will be right.'

"'You saw a woman, you say. Did you see her only once?'—'I saw her three times.'

"'At what distance was she from you?'—'Say thirty or forty yards.'

"'Always at about that distance?'—'Always at about that.'

"'Among the trees?'—'Yes.'

"'Did you walk toward her?'—'Yes.'

"'Well?'—'Then she disappeared.'

"'On every occasion?'—'On every occasion.'

"'As if she were hiding from you?'—'It looked like it.'

"'As if discovering that you were walking toward her, she did not wish you to see her?'—'It's fair to say that.'

"'Was her face turned toward you?'—'Never once.'

"'Then you could not recognize it?'—'It wasn't possible.'

"'That is why you say you did not see any one whom you knew?'—'Yes, that is the reason.'

"'However, you knew it was a woman by her dress?'—'Yes.'

"'By the form or the colour of her dress?'—'More by the colour than the form, though I am certain both ways.'

"'But the colour enables you to be quite positive?'—'Yes.'

"'Now, what was the colour of the dress worn by this woman?'—'It was blue.'

"'Is there any possibility that you could have been mistaken?'—'No.'

"'You swear it was blue?'—'I swear it.'

"'And the woman who wore this blue dress, discovering that you were following her, seemed anxious that you should not see her face?'—'It seemed so.'

"These were the salient features of the examination of Tom Barley, corroborated, as they were, by the evidence of witnesses favourable to the prisoner. Lurking about the

grounds of Parksides was a woman in a blue dress, who was unmistakably anxious that he should not recognize her. The conclusion is that she was known to him, and that she had reasons for avoiding him.

"The prisoner, when she left her aunt's house on the night of the murder, wore a blue dress—her favourite colour. Even without this evidence there was sufficient to warrant the conclusion that the prisoner was guilty of the crime of which she stood charged; but it was natural, perhaps, that her youth and beauty would have won the day with impressionable men, had it not been for this important evidence of colour. In association with Miser Farebrother were two women only, Mrs. Pamflett and the prisoner. Setting a due value upon Tom Barley's evidence, the prosecution had carefully sifted it, and the conclusion arrived at was indisputable. Mrs. Pamflett was not a favourite in Beddington and round about; she had no friends or acquaintances there or anywhere; but she had been compelled to make her purchases in the village, and her appearance was familiar by force of circumstance. She had never been known to wear a blue dress; it was, she said, a detest-

able colour, and she would not purchase even a piece of ribbon of that hue. As the prisoner's favourite colour was blue, so Mrs. Pamflett's was pink, and in all the housekeeper's wardrobe—which, it may be mentioned, was thrown open to the investigation of the prosecution—there was not a fabric of blue.

"Another thing told heavily against the prisoner. In her statement she said that 'it was still dark when she went away' from Parksides. She said, 'There was no light in the sky when I left Parksides behind me.' Tom Barley proved that he saw her in a blue dress when the sun was rising. A sad duty indeed devolved upon the jury, but it was a duty which had to be fulfilled. The verdict of 'Guilty' which was returned was one which could not be avoided by conscientious men, however painful it must have been. Phœbe Farebrother is not the only beautiful and apparently gentle woman upon whom sentence of death has been passed."

CHAPTER XII.

DICK GARDEN TO THE RESCUE.

AUNT and Uncle Leth and their children sat in their once happy home in Camden Town gazing at each other in mute despair. For them the tragedy of life was complete and overwhelming, and their condition was such that they could find no words to give expression to their horror and grief. They were waiting for Fred Cornwall, who had obtained permission to see Phœbe in prison. When he entered the room his face was white and stern. He felt the terrible blow which had fallen upon them no less poignantly than they; but he had not lost the power to act, nor, as with them, had hope entirely deserted him.

"I have seen her," he said, in a low tone. "She sends loving messages to you. I expected to find her heart-broken and prostrate, but she is imbued with a strange strength and resignation. The worst is over, she says;

she must not think of the past, but of the future. She is sustained by a consciousness of innocence, and is inexpressibly comforted by the thought that we know she is innocent. She begs that you will not grieve too deeply for her." He paused a moment or two. "That is the sense of her message to you. She is an angel and a martyr. I can trust myself to say nothing more of my visit to the prison. I must not remain with you now, unless you have something to communicate which may help me in the task upon which I am engaged—of even yet clearing her from the wicked charge. Yes, Aunt Leth, I will move heaven and earth to establish her innocence. I will not rest, I will not sleep—" Again he was compelled to pause; and when he could control himself he said: "I must see Tom Barley. Has he been here to-day?"

"Yes," replied Aunt Leth; "but I fear it will be long before he comes here again. There was a dreadful scene between him and 'Melia Jane. The girl stormed at him for giving his evidence about seeing a woman in a blue dress at Parksides on that fatal night. She said if it had not been for him our poor Phœbe would have been set

free; and when he asked what else he could do but answer the questions they put to him, she answered that he ought to have cut his tongue out first."

"'Melia Jane was right," said Fanny.

"I don't see that he could have acted differently," said Fred, thoughtfully. "Without his evidence the case against my suffering angel would have been incomplete; but there can be no question that he spoke the truth. He did see a woman in a blue dress at Parksides; but it was not Phœbe. The evidence relating to the dresses worn by Mrs. Pamflett is not to be shaken, and it could not have been that she wore on that night a blue dress in order to throw suspicion upon our innocent darling."

"She could have worn such a dress," said Uncle Leth, "and afterward destroyed it."

"That is possible enough; but she could have had no hope, supposing her to be the guilty wretch—"

"Or her son," interposed Fanny.

"She could have had no hope of entangling our Phœbe by so doing. She knew that Phœbe was living here, and the sudden visit our poor girl paid to her father could not

by any possibility have become known to her beforehand. If the woman Tom Barley saw was neither Phœbe nor Mrs. Pamflett, who is she? There are now two mysterious persons in this horrible affair—the man who was in the habit of visiting Miser Farebrother late at night and this woman whom Tom Barley saw, and who was conspicuously anxious that he should not see her face. These matters must be followed up; we can agitate, we can get time. I hear on all sides nothing but sympathy expressed for our dear Phœbe, and the case against her is so entirely circumstantial that I will not, I cannot, give up hope. A friend of mine who has chambers next to mine is so much interested in the case that he has offered to help me all he can. He is clearer-headed than I am just now, and cleverer, and higher up the ladder. He is convinced that Phœbe is innocent, and that there is a mystery in the affair which, unravelled, would set her free."

"God bless him!" sobbed Fanny. "What is the name of this good friend, that I may remember it in my prayers."

"Dick Garden. We are going to work together. He is waiting for me now in my rooms. He is a good fellow—

the best of friends; I rely greatly upon him. Calm as I appear, I am burning with wrath and indignation, and I am scarcely to be depended upon for a clear judicial reasoning upon anything we may happily discover. I must go at once. Then you cannot tell me where I can find Tom Barley?"

"I will find him for you," said Robert, starting up.

"Do; and send him on to my place immediately. Good-by—good-by. If you hear anything, don't fail to let me know."

He drove rapidly to his rooms, where he found his friend Richard Garden awaiting him. This friend was of about the same age as himself; an ambitious, astute young fellow, determined to get along in the world, and almost certain to succeed, for the reason that he had brains and indomitable courage and industry.

He looked up from the paper upon which he was writing when Fred entered. Upon a smaller table in the room some food was spread: a plate of ham and beef, a cold pie, and bread; also a jug of ale.

"You have had nothing to eat?" said Garden. Fred

shook his head impatiently. "Of course you haven't; and you think that we can go into an affair like this with empty stomachs. No, old fellow; we must assist ourselves like sensible men. A craving stomach is a bad mental foundation. Come, tuck away; force something down. That's right. Just taste this cold pie—good, isn't it? A pint of ale between us—here's your half, no more and no less. You feel better, don't you? Now we are fit to set to work. You saw her?"

"Yes."

"Did you get her to talk calmly?"

"She was calmer than you are, Dick. She has made up her mind to die."

"Not for many a long year yet. Here's a letter I've written to the papers, signed 'A Lawyer,' showing up the weak points in the case, and appealing for sympathy and a surer kind of justice. Just finished the fourth copy as you came in. My lad is downstairs; he will take the letters to the newspaper offices, and to-morrow they will be all over the country. Don't lose heart, Fred; there is some infernal mystery at the bottom of this affair, and I mean to

get at it. You asked the poor girl about the dresses Mrs. Pamflett was in the habit of wearing?"

"Yes; and she said she never saw the woman in a blue dress."

"Is she still positive about the brooch?"

"She has not the slightest doubt. When her father turned her from his house she left the brooch behind her."

"Then it must have been placed in the grounds by some person—deliberately placed there."

"Unless it was dropped by accident."

"If so, it must have been a female who dropped it. Either way, the person who dropped or placed it where it was found can be no other than Mrs. Pamflett. Let us suppose that. If dropped by accident, it proves that she must have been near the spot where the miser was murdered; if placed there by her, it must have been placed there for a motive. Miss Farebrother adheres to the truth of her story as to what occurred on the night of her visit to Parksides?"

"Yes."

"She did not see Mrs. Pamflett?"

"No."

"But Mrs. Pamflett may have seen her. Let us assume that she or her son committed the deed. She sees Miss Farebrother in the grounds, and overhears, perhaps, what passes between the poor young lady and her father. She witnesses Miss Farebrother's departure from Parksides. After that the murder is committed. Then, seeing Miss Farebrother's veil on the ground—in Miss Farebrother's condition there are a thousand reasonable hypotheses to account for its having become detached from her hat—the idea presents itself to Mrs. Pamflett to strengthen the case against Miss Farebrother by placing the brooch also near the dead body."

"You do not forget the female in a blue dress that Tom Barley saw in the grounds?"

"I do not; and I cannot account for it. Did you ask Miss Farebrother anything about the man who, according to Mrs. Pamflett, had been in the habit for years of visiting Miser Farebrother secretly at night?"

"To her knowledge, no such man ever presented himself, and no such visits ever took place."

"She has no remembrance of anything of the kind occurring?"

"Not the slightest."

"It is inexplicable. There's some one at the door. Come in!"

It was Robert Lethbridge, who came to say that Tom Barley was on duty, and would not be able to visit Fred Cornwall before the morning; but if they wished to speak to him at once they would find him on his beat.

"No," said Garden; "we will not go to him. I want him when his time is his own, so that we can talk quietly and uninterruptedly. Go and tell him to come and see us at nine o'clock in the morning."

"He can be here earlier, Dick," said Fred Cornwall.

"Nine o'clock is early enough. It will give us time to sleep and rest. I am physician as well as lawyer in this case, it seems."

Robert Lethbridge departed with the message, and he was barely gone before two other visitors presented themselves. These were Kiss, the comedian, and Mr. Linton, the dramatic author. They looked very grave as they

entered. Fred Cornwall introduced them to Richard Garden, who cast a shrewd glance at them, and then said, quietly:

"You have something to tell us?"

"You can speak freely," said Fred. "Mr. Garden and I are working together in this terrible matter."

"A terrible matter indeed, Mr. Cornwall," said Kiss, with deep feeling in his voice, "and Mr. Linton and I are responsible for it." The young lawyers looked at their visitors in surprise at this statement. Kiss continued: "It is the melancholy truth that if it had not been for us an innocent young girl, an angel of sweetness and purity, would not be lying at death's door as we stand here. Unless we can prove her innocence it will haunt us to our dying day."

"Why do you accuse yourselves?" asked Garden.

"Was it not through our folly that Mr. Lethbridge was plunged into difficulties? Believing that my friend Linton had written a play which would make all our fortunes, did we not go to Mr. Lethbridge and by our plausible statements induce him to sign a bill for three hundred pounds which

that infamous scoundrel, Jeremiah Pamflett, discounted? You will remember the play I refer to, Mr. Garden; it was *A Heart of Gold*, which, because of an extraordinary first-night speech made by Mr. Linton, blazed up for a fortnight or so, and then spluttered out like a tallow candle with a damp wick. It was in the hope of helping her uncle out of his difficulties—for which we, and we alone, were responsible—that Miss Farebrother paid a visit to her father on the night he was murdered. Had she not gone he would have been murdered all the same—there is no doubt in our minds as to that—and, safe and happy at home with her aunt and uncle, by no possibility could suspicion have been cast upon her. But she *did* go, because none of us were able to pay the money which Mr. Lethbridge borrowed for us. Do you see now how it is that we are responsible for what has occurred? It is Linton and I who ought to have been placed in the dock instead of that sweet, unfortunate young lady. Since the lying accusation was brought against her, we have not been able to sleep. If exhausted nature compels us to go off in a doze, we start up in affright and horror. There will never again be rest for either of us until

Miss Farebrother is set at liberty and her honourable name restored to her."

"Your feelings do you credit," said Garden; "but it is not alone to say what you have said that you have come here to-night?"

"No; but it leads up to what may be of importance. God knows whether it will or not, but drowning men catch at a straw. I am glad you are working with Mr. Cornwall, sir; it is easy to see how he is suffering, and you must be a comfort to him—if," he added, feelingly, "anybody *can* comfort him at such a time as this. Well, sir, Linton and I have also been putting our heads together, and we decided to set a watch."

"Upon whom?"

"Upon that image of wickedness, Jeremiah Pamflett, and his equally wicked mother. Sir, that tale of hers as to what took place between her and Miss Farebrother on the night of the murder is false as— Never mind; it will not do to be profane."

"That is to say, you believe it to be false? You have no direct evidence to the contrary?"

"No, sir; unfortunately we have not. It is our belief, as you say, but none the less incontrovertible. It is not because we have dramatic ideas that we determined to watch this precious pair. It seemed to us to offer a chance of discovering something; therefore we set practically to work, Linton watching the son, I watching the mother. Until this evening we saw nothing that could be turned against them. You are probably aware that Mrs. Pamflett left Parksides shortly after the murder?"

"She had to leave," remarked Fred; "as Miss Farebrother's legal representative, I saw to that before the trial took place."

"Quite proper. And her son had to leave the London office and seek lodgings elsewhere?"

"Yes; that was also effected through me."

"Being thrown upon their own resources, they took two rooms in Knightsbridge. We tracked them there. Sometimes they went out together, sometimes alone. When they were together they scarcely spoke to each other, and it seemed to us as if this silence had been determined upon between them; what they said might have been overheard,

and they might have said something injudicious. It almost appeared as if nothing was to come of our watch. There was a monotony in it which weighed upon us, and we were almost in despair. We tried to get a room in the house they lodged in, but there was none to let. The day before yesterday, however, something occurred to rouse us. We saw a woman watching the house they lived in. She knocked at the street door, and received an answer to her questions from the landlady. Then she retired, and from a short distance kept watch upon the house—you may imagine how excited this made us—until Jeremiah Pamflett came out alone. He walked along apparently with no suspicion in his mind that he was being followed by the woman, and certainly with no suspicion that Linton and I were walking behind them both. You may be certain that we were very careful. It is excusable in me as an actor, and in Linton as a dramatic author, that we should adopt some slight disguise, altered from day to day under my direction, to lessen the chances of our being detected in case Jeremiah Pamflett should happen to see us. Well, sir, as the four of us were walking along in Indian file, what did the woman

suddenly do but go up to Jeremiah and accost him! And what did he do but start violently, turn round to look at the woman, and then, without saying one word to her, walk rapidly away with the conspicuous intention of getting rid of her. From a rapid walk he got into a run, and the woman and we lost sight of him. So far as that incident was concerned, there was an end of it. We lost sight, too, of the woman; but not before we saw sufficient of her to be able to recognize her if we should see her again. Yesterday we were again in view of the house in which these Pamfletts lodged, and there again was the same woman watching, as we judged, for her friend Jeremiah. But he did not make his appearance, and after remaining in the neighbourhood for nearly an hour, we saw the landlady put a card in her front window, 'Rooms to let.' Across the road went the woman; she knocked at the door, made some inquiries of the landlady, and came away with a spiteful, disappointed expression on her face. I told Linton to follow her, and find out where she lived. Meanwhile I myself went across to the house, and inquired about the rooms to let. It was as I suspected: the Pamfletts had

left—'quite sudden,' the landlady said. Putting this and that together, I came to the conclusion that they had left their lodgings, and most probably the neighbourhood, because of the discovery by the woman of their whereabouts. This looked so much like fright on the part of Jeremiah Pamflett that it stirred me up and made me hopeful. But where had he and his mother flown to? Sir, this very evening chance has befriended us, and we are again on the track. Give me, if you please, your closest attention; I am approaching something rather startling."

"Stop a moment," said Garden, rising and going to the side-board, from which he took a bottle of apollinaris and a bottle of brandy, "you seem rather faint."

"To tell you the truth," said Kiss, "I have scarcely tasted food to-day, I have been that anxious and distressed."

"We are all engaged in the same good cause," said Garden, smiling, "and every one, with the exception of myself, seems bent upon starving himself. Take a slice of this pie; Mr. Linton will join you. You don't object to brandy and apollinaris?"

"Not at all," said Kiss, speaking with his mouth full;

"split it between Linton and me. Mr. Garden, you are a wise gentleman and a capable chief. If we are happily successful in the end we have in view—and I pray God we shall be!—we shall have you to thank for it. Do you not think with me, Mr. Cornwall?"

Fred pressed Garden's hand with emotion, and Garden, shrewd, cool, self-possessed, and with all his wits about him, returned the pressure, and gave Fred a look of encouragement. It was like wine to Fred. His hopes grew stronger. Perhaps, after all, his dear, suffering girl would, by the mercy of God, be rescued from her dread peril, and be spared to brighten his life and the lives of those who held her dear. His eyes grew dim, and he pressed his hand across them.

"Do not overrate my services," said Garden, in his clear strong voice. "I am only a moderately skilful engineer, and my hardest task, it appears to me, is to keep the machinery of which I have direction in fair workable order. Now, then, Mr. Kiss, you look double the man you were. We are all attention."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DIAMOND BRACELET AGAIN.

"MR. LINTON," continued Kiss, "followed the woman who was so anxious to enter into relations—evidently not new ones—with that abominable scoundrel Jeremiah Pamflett, and who had exhibited such vexation at his sudden disappearance; he learnt her address, but could not discover her name. Inquiring of people who lived in the same house, he was informed by some that they knew nothing whatever of her, and was told by others to mind his own business. But, as I said, chance befriended us; not two hours ago we saw the woman and Jeremiah together. We had failed in tracking him down; she had succeeded. And of all the corners in this Babylon where should Jeremiah have taken up his new lodgings but in South Lambeth, three doors from the house in which Linton lives! That is not the only piece of luck which chance has thrown in our way. The

landlady of the house in which he rents rooms is a friend of Mrs. Linton. This good lady, who is as deeply concerned in the terrible course of events as we are, is now in that house—on the watch. Jeremiah Pamflett and his mother will not escape us again so easily. So much for the side issue—what I may call the under-plot. Now for the important discovery. When we saw Jeremiah and the woman together—he looking very much disturbed and she very determined and vicious—I desired Linton to keep in the background. Without flattery, I may say I am a better actor than he is, and, besides, I was more completely disguised. My object was to discover what these two were talking about. So I followed them close enough to hear scraps of their conversation, but not close enough to draw suspicious observation upon myself. The first thing I heard that caused me surprise was a name—Captain Ablewhite. It was the woman who gave utterance to it, and accompanying her mention of the name were some words by no means complimentary to its owner. 'He's a damned scoundrel,' said the woman to Jeremiah, as I casually passed them, 'and you're another!' Now a high-minded, honest man

would have fired up at this. Jeremiah Pamflett did not; he was as meek as a turnip. They passed on out of hearing; but I did not lose sight of them. 'Captain Ablewhite!' thought I, 'Captain Ablewhite! How is it that the name seems so familiar to me?' Does it sound familiar to you, sir?"

"In a vague way, yes," replied Garden; "but I cannot immediately place it. I am not personally acquainted with any one of that name."

"Nor I, sir; but that did not prevent it bothering me. I took another favourable opportunity of getting close to the woman and Jeremiah. She was talking away at a rapid rate, he saying hardly a word; but I happened to catch a wicked look in his eyes once as he looked down on her. It was more than wicked, it was devilish; and I could not help thinking that it was a good job they were not walking in a dark place with no people about. If ever murder was expressed in a man's face, it was expressed in the face of Jeremiah Pamflett as he cast that look at his companion. 'Half the money you and Ablewhite got for the diamond bracelet'—don't miss a word of this, sir; I am repeating

what the woman said to Jeremiah—'was to come to my share, and a few sovereigns is all I have managed to screw out of him. The false villain has thrown me over for another woman, and has given me the slip; but I'll take care you don't serve me the same. I have found out your new quarters—you live at No. 12, Surrey Street.' That, sir, is three doors from Linton's lodgings—he lives at No. 15. You will understand that it would have been the height of imprudence for me to have remained near this precious pair for more than a few moments at a time, but what I had already heard opened my eyes. It came upon me like a flash of lightning. Captain Ablewhite and a diamond bracelet! Why, that story was in all the papers a little while ago, and created a regular stir. Linton is making use of it now in a new drama he is writing. Real life, sir; facts with which the public is familiar—that's the sort of thing for the stage. You remember the story, of course?"

"I remember it well," said Garden, cool and collected as ever. "Go on, Mr. Kiss; something may come of this."

"Something *will* come of it, sir,' said Kiss, his voice

growing more excited. "You haven't got the essence of what I heard; I shall astonish you presently. You remember what a laugh there was when Mr. Quinlan's statement was published in the papers. Mr. Quinlan was the husband of the lady from whom the diamond bracelet had been stolen, and the information he gave to the police and the reporters was that the bracelet that had been stolen was one he had had made in imitation of the genuine article, and that the stones the thieves had got hold of were false. 'The Biters Bit'—that was the heading in the newspapers."

"I remember it all perfectly."

"Listen now to what I learnt from the stray bits of conversation I picked up as I followed Jeremiah and the woman. She was Mrs. Quinlan's maid; the man waiting outside the Langham Hotel was Jeremiah Pamflett. She gave him the bracelet. Afterward he met Captain Ablewhite, but what passed between them, of course, cannot be known. The woman knows, however, that the bracelet was taken to Miser Farebrother, and that it was he who advanced money on it, Jeremiah being the go-between. I did not hear all

this as I am relating it, but I put it together out of what I managed to pick up, and I will stake my life that it is near enough to the truth for us or any one to work upon. That, however, does not bring down the curtain; you have yet to hear the climax. Linton could not have worked it up more dramatically. The last words that reached my ears were these: 'You fool!' said the woman to Jeremiah. 'The bracelet you received from me was the genuine one. The stones were real, and are worth forty thousand pounds, and I mean to have my share of the plunder.' The moment she said this, Jeremiah, in a kind of frenzy, clapped his hand on her mouth and dragged her away. A cab was passing, and he hailed it, and hustled the woman in, giving some directions to the driver. The next moment they were gone. If there had been another cab in view I would have followed them, but unfortunately there wasn't one in the street. The first thing I did after that was to run with Linton to his lodgings, and the first thing Mrs. Linton said to us was that Mrs. Pamflett and her son had taken the two rooms that had been to let at No. 12. 'Are you acquainted with the landlady?' I asked, and Mrs. Linton answered

that she and the landlady of No. 12 were friends. 'Go and bring her here at once,' I said; and no sooner said than done. It took but a few minutes to get the landlady on our side; it was Mrs. Linton who did that. It would not have been safe for me or Linton to go to No. 12 to watch; Jeremiah Pamflett knows us, and at close quarters might see through any disguise we might assume; but neither he nor Mrs. Pamflett has ever seen Mrs. Linton, so we appointed her sentinel. The next best thing we thought we could do was to come straight here and make Mr. Cornwall acquainted with our discovery. The question is, what is to be done? We might go to the police—"

Garden held up his hand, and Kiss did not finish the sentence.

"That would be the worst thing we could do," he said. "What you have discovered must at present be mentioned to no other person but ourselves. The task upon which we are engaged is that of saving an innocent young lady's life; all else is of small importance. How was the woman dressed?"

"Very quietly, in black."

"Does she resemble Miss Farebrother in build?"

"Not at all. She is shorter and stouter."

"Did you hear anything definite as to the length of time she has been in London?"

"Nothing; but judging in a general way, I should say she has only recently returned from foreign parts with the idea of obtaining from Jeremiah Pamflett a share of the proceeds of the robbery."

"A share of the money he received from Miser Farebrother for the bracelet that was stolen? Yes, that is a natural conclusion." The young lawyer rose from his seat and went to a corner of the room where a great pile of newspapers lay. "Mr. Cornwall keeps a file of the *Times* for reference; it will help us." He searched through the papers, and soon found the one he wanted. He smiled quietly as he looked down the columns. "It is as I suspected. The account of the robbery of the diamond bracelet was first published on the day preceding that upon which Miser Farebrother was murdered." They all started at this. And the young lawyer proceeded: "Let us build up a theory. Jeremiah Pamflett takes a diamond bracelet

of great value to his master, and upon the strength of his representations Miser Farebrother advances a sum of money upon it—believing the stones to be genuine. On the day before his death a newspaper falls into his hands, and he learns from it that he has been tricked—that the bracelet has been stolen, and that the diamonds are false. We know that the one passion of his life is money—it is his idol, his god. We have it in evidence that on that day, in the afternoon, doubtless, after he made this discovery, he sent a telegram to Jeremiah Pamflett in London, requesting his manager's attendance at Parksides. Miser Farebrother was not in the habit of wasting money upon telegrams; hence his sending of this message was prompted by some particular motive—say the demand from Jeremiah Pamflett for the restitution of the money of which he has been defrauded. Before this scoundrel leaves London for Parksides he also has learnt that a trick has been played upon him by Captain Ablewhite and the woman who has tracked him down. At Parksides a stormy scene takes place between the miser and his scoundrel manager. The miser threatens criminal proceedings, but perhaps gives the scoundrel time to refund the

money he has advanced. They part with feelings of bitter rage towards each other. What course is now open to Jeremiah Pamflett? Has he the money to refund? Unlikely. Can he borrow it? Quite as unlikely. I bear in mind what I gathered from you, Fred, respecting the bill for three hundred pounds which Mr. Lethbridge accepted. You arranged for the payment of that bill with a betting man, who had received it from Jeremiah Pamflett. Natural inference: that the scoundrel Jeremiah had been backing horses, and losing. If necessary, we will look that betting man up. Not seeing his way to refund the money which has been advanced on the bracelet, nothing but exposure and disgrace lies before Jeremiah Pamflett. How to avoid impending ruin? How to avoid a felon's fate? Miser Farebrother lives practically alone in the house at Parksides, waited upon by the house-keeper, Jeremiah's mother. These two are bound to each other by mutual interests. Who so likely to profit by Miser Farebrother's death as Jeremiah Pamflett? Unhappily, on that night Miss Farebrother goes down to Parksides on her heavenly mission of love. But, before she makes her appearance there, the murder of

her father is resolved upon. There is no independent evidence that Jeremiah returned to London and reached his office by eleven o'clock. We have only his word for it. Had Miss Farebrother not visited Parksides on that night, suspicion would have fallen upon the Pamfletts, and the hour of the scoundrel's return to London would have been a vital point. I put aside the account given by Mrs. Pamflett of the visit of a strange man to Miser Farebrother. It may or may not be true. Equally it may or may not be a concocted story, invented beforehand for safety. Here comes in Tom Barley's evidence as to his seeing in the grounds a female in a blue dress. The honest fellow spoke the truth; he saw what he was compelled to swear to. Miss Farebrother wore such a dress. But why should she avoid him? He was her tried and faithful friend. Convinced as we are of her innocence, there is no reason for her avoidance. Here lies the mystery; if we can solve it Miss Farebrother is safe. And solve it we will—— My God!"

They had listened to him in profound admiration. Entranced by his masterly analysis, it seemed to Fred as if they had only to go to the prison in which Phœbe was

immured and demand her release. But when he uttered the words "My God!" and started to his feet and paced the room in a state of excitement, which, for a few moments was uncontrollable, their feelings of admiration changed to astonishment, and they gazed at him in amazement.

"What is it, Dick?" cried Fred. "What is it?"

He seized Garden's hands, and would have held him still; but Garden threw him off, and continued to pace the room.

"Don't speak to me for a moment!" he cried. "What I have suddenly thought of is so wild that I cannot reveal it. But if it is a true inspiration, it means salvation! Ask me nothing, for I shall not answer you. It is for you to answer me. It has occurred to me that Mrs. Pamflett and Mrs. Lethbridge are about the same height and figure."

"Good God!" cried Fred. "What do you mean?"

"Answer my question, Fred," said Garden, "as you value Miss Farebrother's life. The women—one a devil, the other an angel—are about the same height and figure?"

"Yes, they are."

"And from a short distance—say thirty or forty yards—might possibly be mistaken for each other?"

"Yes, it is possible."

"Thank you." He had succeeded in mastering his agitation, and now to all appearance was calm. "Meanwhile," he said, sitting at the table and beginning to write, "what has become of the diamond bracelet?"

The question was uttered in a musing tone, as though he were asking it of himself. He continued to write for four or five minutes, and having completed his task, he read what he had written, folded the paper and put it in his pocket. Then he turned to Kiss and Mr. Linton.

"You have nothing more to say?"

"Nothing."

"You delight in dramatic surprises?" he said, addressing Linton, with a radiant look.

"If they are new to the stage," replied the bewildered dramatic author, "they are invaluable."

"I may supply you with one. It is just on the cards." He now addressed Kiss as well as Mr. Linton. "Our

interview is at an end. What I wish you to do is to so arrange matters that we can at any moment lay hands upon Mrs. Pamflett, her son, and the woman who is implicated in the theft of the diamond bracelet. Do you think you can manage it?"

"I will answer for that."

"When you came here to-night," he said, earnestly, "you reproached yourself for being the cause of an innocent girl being sentenced to death for a murder she did not commit. You went back, as it were, to first causes. It is likely—almost certain, indeed, so much depends upon chance—that if you had not come, the inspiration which may mean salvation would not have descended upon me. To you, therefore, if all ends as I fervently pray it may, will belong the credit of directing justice aright. Humanly administered, it is sometimes fallible."

"Mr. Garden," said Kiss, in a voice no less earnest than that of the young lawyer, "I have not the slightest idea of your meaning, but you have won my esteem, and I honour you with all my heart and soul."

"I thank you," said the young lawyer, with dignity and

courtesy; "what you kindly accord to me is worth the winning. Good-night."

When Kiss and Mr. Linton were gone, Garden said to Fred: "I am deeply, truly in earnest. For a little while leave the direction of this affair entirely in my hands. Give me your promise."

"I give it, Dick, old fellow, cheerfully."

"I am going now to the office of a newspaper, the editor of which I am acquainted with. I shall take a cab there and back. Unless some urgent necessity arises, do not leave the rooms till I return."

The next morning, in the columns of one daily London newspaper, the following interesting item found a place:

"Our readers will remember the incident of the abstraction of a wonderful diamond bracelet from the jewel-case of a lady of fabulous wealth. This bracelet was valued at sixty thousand pounds. A singular and somewhat humorous turn was given to this robbery by the wealthy husband of the owner, who, when public attention was directed to

the matter, stated that the ornament stolen was one he had had made in exact imitation of the original, and that the stones of which the thieves had obtained possession were false. Information has reached us that this was not the case, and that the missing bracelet is the genuine one. If this be true, the daring robbers made a rare haul, of which, as nothing whatever has been heard of them, they have by this time reaped the advantage. The task of disposing of these diamonds singly in the markets of the world could not have been very difficult, their identification being almost impossible. In the interests of justice it is to be regretted that the truth was not made public in the first instance; supposing the thieves to have been moderately prudent, it is now too late to repair the error."

This paragraph was copied in subsequent editions of hundreds of London and provincial newspapers.

CHAPTER XIV.

RICHARD GARDEN MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF FANNY LETHBRIDGE.

PUNCTUALLY at nine o'clock in the morning Tom Barley made his appearance in Fred Cornwall's rooms. Garden, having assumed the command of what nearly every one but himself would have considered a forlorn hope, of course was present; he was fresh and bright, but Fred's face was haggard and anxious. In this respect Tom Barley was no better off; the poor fellow was suffering a martyrdom. The reproaches hurled against him by 'Melia Jane had caused him to look upon himself as a monster of wickedness, and to believe that it was his evidence alone that had brought his beloved young mistress into deadly peril. When Fred Cornwall offered him his hand he shrank back a little, and stood before the young lawyers in an attitude of sad humility, with his arms drooping by his side.

"Why will you not give me your hand, Tom?" asked Fred.

"It's more than I dare do, sir," replied Tom. "I ought to have mine cut off, and my tongue cut out as well, for saying what I did in court, and for bringing Miss Phœbe to her death. If I'd had a notion of the consequences of my evidence, not a word would they have got out of me, whatever the consequence. 'Melia Jane is right; I don't deserve to live. It come over me last night that I might have saved Miss Phœbe if, instead of saying what I did say, I had said something else."

"What?" inquired Garden, in a kind tone.

"Confessed to killing Miser Farebrother myself. I was there, and might have done it, and would if I'd seen him, as sure as there's a God above us, if I'd had a notion of what things were coming to! Yes; if I'd said as much they'd have been bound to believe me, and Miss Phœbe would have been set free. You see, sir, there was every reason for my killing him; he treated me like a dog for years, and I hated him worse than poison. Are you a lawyer, sir?"

"Yes," replied Garden; "and I am assisting Mr. Cornwall in this matter that we all have so much at heart. I do not at all despair of proving Miss Farebrother's innocence even yet."

"There's only one way of doing that, sir, if it can be done legally. I'd like to ask you a question, if you wouldn't mind answering it."

"Go on, Tom."

"Would it be too late for me to go to the police-station now, and give myself up for the murder? If they'd only believe me I should be a happy man again. Then Miss Phœbe would be saved, and everything 'd be right."

"It is too late for that, Tom. Besides, it would be depriving us of the chance of bringing the crime home to the guilty parties and making them suffer for it."

"Ah! if we could do that, sir, it would be the happiest day's work that ever was done in this cruel world! I'd be content to die the day after."

"Well, I am not at all sure that we shall not manage it," said Garden, "and perhaps, Tom, it all depends upon you."

"Upon me, sir!" cried Tom; and Fred also turned to Garden in surprise.

"Perhaps upon you. We shall soon know if the tack I am on will bring us safe into port."

"Your inspiration, Dick?" asked Fred, anxiously.

"My inspiration, Fred," said Garden, gravely. "If the tack is a wrong one, we'll try another. Now, Tom, you have nothing to reproach yourself with. You could do no less than speak the truth."

"I could, sir; I could have held my tongue."

"There is no possibility of your being mistaken in any part of the evidence you gave?"

"Unluckily no, sir. I say so to you because you're Miss Phœbe's friend; but if I had the opportunity now I'd swear the other way."

"Don't speak like that, Tom. What we want is to save Miss Farebrother honestly and honourably: that is our first great object. The next is to bring the murderers to justice. You were not in court during the whole of the trial."

"No, sir. I was told when to go to give my evidence, and then I had to go back to my duty."

"You were not aware, before you answered the questions as to the woman you saw in the grounds at Parksides and the dress she wore, that other witnesses were examined with respect to the colour of the dress Miss Farebrother had on when she left her aunt's house?"

"No, sir, I knew nothing of it; and I wondered what they were driving at."

"You swore to the colour—blue?"

"Yes, sir," replied poor Tom, hanging his head.

"You would swear to it again?"

Tom looked round helplessly.

"You would swear to it again?" repeated Garden.

"No, I wouldn't," said Tom savagely.

"You would, Tom, because it is the truth; and if I am on the right tack, only the truth will serve us. Now, although you were not in court during the whole of the trial, you read the report of it in the papers?"

"I did, sir."

"Clear your mind, Tom, and bend it on what I am about to ask you. In reading the report of the trial, did anything particular strike you?"

"It was full of lies, sir."

"I am sure of that. But anything very special"—and here Garden's voice trembled slightly, as though he were approaching a crucial test—"say as to the colour of dresses? Think, Tom."

"No occasion to think, sir. What they said about Mrs. Pamflett's dresses was a pack of lies from beginning to end."

"How is that, Tom?" asked Garden, rising and moving a step nearer to Tom Barley.

"Why, sir, wasn't it said that Mrs. Pamflett hated blue dresses, and never wore one."

"They did, Tom."

"Damned lies, sir! Why didn't they ask *me* about that? I ought to know, living at Parksides the years I did. I've seen her hundreds and hundreds of times in a blue dress."

Garden caught Fred's hand. "You are ready to swear that?"

"Ready, sir? Yes; and it's the truth—by God!"

A look of triumph flashed into Garden's eyes, and his face was radiant. "I'm on the right tack, Fred," he cried; "Miss Farebrother is saved!"

On the evening of that day Richard Garden and Fred Cornwall met Kiss by appointment. The kind-hearted actor had news of vital importance to give them. Mrs. Pamflett and Jeremiah were still at No. 12 Surrey Street, and had not stirred out the whole of the day.

"Adjoining the room they eat and drink in," said Kiss, "is a little box-room, too small to let to any lodger, but large enough for lumber, and that's the use it's put to by the landlady. Formerly it was part of the room the two fiends have taken, but some time ago it was partitioned off for boxes and that kind of thing. Consequently the wall that separates it from the larger room is made of wood instead of brick. It is a cupboard, nothing more, and anybody concealed there can hear what is going on in the adjoining apartment. Sir, Mrs. Linton, provided with sandwiches and cold tea, has been concealed in that cupboard nearly the whole of the day unknown to the Pamfletts. The woman who stole the diamond bracelet has been with them, and she heard all that passed. That strange paragraph which is in all the evening papers about the bracelet that was stolen being the genuine one, is true. Mrs. Linton

heard the woman swear to it. She wanted to know whether Jeremiah Pamflett had possession of the bracelet. At first he denied that he had, but the woman said he was telling a lie, and she did not intend to be done. They almost got to high words, but the Pamfletts spoke in a low voice and calmed the woman down; and upon her swearing that if they did not tell her the truth she would go straight to the police-station and confess the robbery and have them arrested, they confessed that they *had* got the bracelet, but had deposited it elsewhere for safety. 'That being so,' said the woman, 'you must have stolen it from Miser Farebrother, and the girl who has been found guilty of his murder is innocent. It was *you* who murdered him! You are in my power now, and if you don't pay me well to hold my tongue I'll have the pair of you hanged!' For a little while after that Mrs. Linton heard nothing more—only a murmur of voices; but before she went away she heard the woman say, 'To-morrow night, then, at ten o'clock; and mind you come with the bracelet and the money ready. If you don't, your life is not worth an hour's purchase.' That was all; when the woman was gone, Mrs. Pamflett

and her son talked in whispers, and not a word could Mrs. Linton catch. But I think she heard enough."

"Quite enough," said Garden, "and you have rendered us an inestimable service. What you have told us would almost justify our taking immediate action against the monsters; but there is something else of great importance to do within the next few hours. We will take them red-handed to-morrow night, the two murderers and the thief who in the first instance stole the bracelet. Then the case will be complete, and there will be no escape for them. Now go back and keep watch upon their movements. They must not be allowed to go anywhere without being followed. If you have the slightest reason to fear that they will give you the slip, lay hands upon them, collect a crowd, and give them in charge."

"Upon what charge?" asked Kiss.

"Upon the charge of stealing the bracelet. If that will not do, say that new evidence has come to light respecting the murder of Miser Farebrother, which proves them to be implicated in it. Give the police my card, and say I will attend at the police station at ten o'clock to-morrow

morning to prove my case. Meanwhile, you will, of course, let me know that you have taken action. But the necessity will not arise: the Pamfletts will not attempt to escape from the woman for the next twenty-four hours; they are quite aware that sudden flittings from place to place would be likely to draw attention upon them, and their chief desire is to avoid observation and be left to themselves, in order that in a little while they may disappear quietly from the country, taking with them the bracelet and the money they must have stolen from Miser Farebrother. If I were not thoroughly convinced of this I should set aside a most important affair in connection with the evidence upon the murder, and have the Pamfletts arrested immediately. My object is to make the case against them so complete that they shall have no loop-hole of escape. It will hasten the hour of Miss Farebrother's release, instead of retarding it."

"You are a good general, Mr. Garden," said Kiss; "you put heart into your soldiers. Your instructions shall be followed to the letter."

Half an hour afterward they were in Aunt Leth's house, and were shown into the room in which that good woman

and Fanny were sitting. Aunt Leth started up at their entrance, but before she could speak, Garden said,

"You received my letter?"

"Yes, and Fred's also, telling me to do everything you desired."

"Then you have everything prepared?"

"Yes, everything."

"Try to be calm, I beg of you, for your dear niece's sake."

"I will, I will. But it is all so strange—and I cannot understand—"

"Make no attempt to do so yet; very soon you will know all. You will be ready to start with Fred at one o'clock?"

"Yes, I shall be ready."

"Wrap yourself up warm; the nights are chilly now. You may have some time to wait, but you will not mind that. I want to be sure that you will be there before us. Fred will show you exactly what you have to do, and the time to do it. Sit down now and compose yourself. It would be all the better if you could sleep for an hour or

two before you start. If you cannot sleep, you can rest; and remember that everything we are doing is to save an innocent angel, to restore her to light and love."

"One word only," said the agitated woman: "you have hope?"

"Something more than hope," replied Garden, with a bright look; "almost a certainty!"

"Oh, thank God!—thank God!" murmured Aunt Leth; and, sinking into a chair, she covered her face with her hands, and, with tears gushing from her eyes, prayed silently and fervently.

"Mr. Garden," said Fanny, stepping forward and taking his hand, "you will save my dear cousin?"

"If it is in man's power to save her," said Garden, gazing earnestly at her sweet, imploring face, "I will save her."

"It *is* in your power, is it not? You believe it is in your power?"

"Yes, Miss Lethbridge; I firmly believe it."

All this time she had held his hand, and now she lowered her face to it; and a thrill ran through Garden's frame as

he felt the soft pressure of her lips. Then Fanny turned and went to her mother's side, and folded her in her arms.

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE EXPERIMENT.

At an hour past midnight Fred Cornwall called for Aunt Leth in a closed carriage, drawn by a pair of smart horses. Aunt Leth, warmly enveloped in a cloak which entirely covered her dress, was waiting for him. Parting from her family with tears and kisses and blessings, she accompanied Fred to the carriage, and they drove slowly off in the direction of Parksides.

About a mile behind them, on the same road, trotted a horse attached to a dog-cart. Garden was driving, and Tom Barley sat by his side. On the back seat sat a groom.

"What I want you to do, Tom," said Garden, "is to go over the ground exactly as you did on the night of the murder. Where you stopped then, I want you to stop now; and it will be all the better if you can remember the exact turns you took on that occasion."

"There's no fear, sir, of my not being able to remember. Day and night I think of nothing else."

"And now tell me again what occurred on the night Miss Farebrother was turned from her father's house, and you rode with her to London on that scoundrel Pamflett's horse."

Engaged in conversation, they drove along until they heard the sound of carriage-wheels in front of them; and presently, through the darkness, they discerned the carriage.

"Hold the horse, Tom," said Garden. "That carriage seems to be going the same road as we are, and I want to be certain that we are going right."

"We are going quite right, sir. I could take you blindfold, I believe."

"I dare say, Tom," said Garden, jumping down from the dog-cart; "but I am a self-willed fellow, and I would not make a mistake to-night for all the gold in the world. We have plenty of time, have we not?"

"Plenty, sir."

"Stop here, then. I will rejoin you presently."

He ran and called after the carriage; and the coachman, obeying instructions from some one inside, pulled up. In

a breathless state, Garden presented himself at the carriage door.

"Are you all right and comfortable?" he gasped.

"Yes, Dick," replied Fred. "And you?"

"Everything is going on splendidly," said Garden. "A bright night, Mrs. Lethbridge, isn't it?"

She pressed his hand in acquiescence, her voice failing her when she tried to answer him. It was a singular opinion to have of a night so dark that they could scarcely see a dozen yards before them.

"You must take care and not catch cold," said Garden. "Was Miss Lethbridge well when you left her?"

Fred replied for Aunt Leth. "Yes, Dick; and she sent you the kindest of messages."

"It was very good of her to think of me. But you don't mean to say you saw her, Fred? She ought to have been asleep hours before."

"She is not going to bed to-night. Bob will remain up with her. Uncle Leth will take a little rest on the sofa."

"Well, perhaps it is natural. I must get back to the

dog-cart now, or Tom Barley may be impatient. Drive on, coachman."

As Garden retraced his steps to the dog-cart he saw with his mind's eye Fanny's pretty face looking up through her tears, and the smile upon his lips was a proof that the vision was an agreeable one.

It was a little past four o'clock when the dog-cart drew up at the gates of Parksides.

"Now, Tom," said Garden, as he and Tom Barley alighted, "take me over the ground, and don't make the slightest mistake."

The strange task upon which they were engaged occupied them till sunrise.

"Was the light when you saw the woman in the blue dress about the same as it is now?" asked Garden.

"Yes, sir; only it was a little earlier in the morning. And I was standing as near as possible on this very spot when I first saw her."

"I want to know the exact direction, Tom. We are facing those trees yonder. Was it there?"

"Yes, sir; among those very trees."

"Be sure, Tom," said Garden, stepping two or three paces behind, and taking a white handkerchief from his pocket. "Don't turn, Tom! You are sure?"

"I am sure, sir," said Tom, looking straight before him.

Garden waved the white handkerchief high in the air, and the next moment Tom uttered a loud cry, and darted forward. Garden ran swiftly after him, and caught his arm.

"Why, what is the matter with you, Tom?"

"There! there!" cried Tom, struggling to release himself; but Garden held him fast. Tom's voice trembled from excitement, and his face was white. "I saw her this very minute."

"Saw whom?"

"The woman in the blue dress," cried Tom. "Let me go, sir! let me go!"

"You must be dreaming, Tom," said Garden, his heart beating high with exultation. "Keep still, keep still! Remember you have promised to obey me implicitly."

"I saw her, I tell you!" cried Tom, shaking all over, but ceasing to struggle. "And now she has disappeared!"

"As she did on the night of the murder?"

"Yes, as she did then."

"But you saw her again?"

"Yes, I saw her again."

"But not in the same spot?"

"No," said Tom, turning in another direction. "This way."

He walked on fifty or sixty yards, and Garden, holding his arm more lightly, accompanied him.

"Why do you stop, Tom?"

"Because I saw her in that clump the second time."

Garden took his hand from Tom's arm and stepped behind him. Again he took his white handkerchief from his pocket.

"Are you quite sure you are not mistaken, Tom?"

"It isn't possible for me to be mistaken," said Tom. Garden once more waved his handkerchief in the air. "There! there! There she is again!"

"All right!" shouted Garden, as though he were addressing some person in the distance. Racing after Tom, he threw his arms around him.

"If you don't let me go," screamed Tom, "I shall do you a mischief! There she is coming towards us!"

Slowly approaching them was a woman in a pink dress, holding her head down.

"Now, Tom," whispered Garden. "It will be over in a moment or two. For God's sake keep still, or you will ruin everything! Do you say that dress is blue?"

"What trick are you playing me?" exclaimed Tom, in a hoarse, broken voice. "Do you want to drive me mad? It *is* blue, I tell you! I'll take my dying oath on it!"

The woman was now very near to them. She raised her head, and Tom started back in affright as he recognised the face of Aunt Leth.

"Tom," she said, holding out her hand.

But Tom, holding his hands out-stretched before him, shrank from her as she advanced.

"Tom," said Garden, "you know Mrs. Lethbridge?"

"Yes," replied Tom, in the voice of a man who was utterly dazed, "I know her."

"Would she knowingly deceive you? Would she, whose

one great hope is that of saving Miss Farebrother's life, knowingly tell you a lie?"

"No; she could not, she could not!"

"Mrs. Lethbridge," said Garden, "what is the colour of the dress you are wearing?"

"Pink," said Aunt Leth, with wistful trembling.

"Pink!" muttered Tom. "Am I going mad?"

"And here is Mr. Cornwall," said Garden, as Fred joined them. "Fred, what is the colour of the dress Mrs. Lethbridge has on?"

"Pink," said Fred.

"Mrs. Pamflett's favourite colour," said Garden. "The colour of the dress she wore when you saw her here on the night of the murder."

"If you've got any pity in you, sir," implored Tom, "tell me what all this means!"

"It means, Tom," answered Garden, "that Miss Farebrother is saved, and her innocence proved. It means, Tom, that you are colour-blind. By the mercy of God this has been discovered in time. See to Mrs. Lethbridge, Fred; she is fainting!"

CHAPTER XVI.

JEREMIAH AND HIS MOTHER DISAPPEAR.

THAT was the busiest of days. There was so much for Richard Garden to do that the wonder was how the young fellow got through it. There were reports from Kiss and Linton to receive from time to time; interviews to be held with the Home Secretary; interviews also with the judge and with the lawyers for the prosecution; test examinations of Tom Barley by experts in colour-blindness; excursions to Scotland Yard; and a thousand matters to be attended to. Other persons were busy as well. There was sunshine once more in Aunt Leth's house; the family were looking forward with eager impatience to the joy of their dear girl's release; the room which Phœbe shared with Fanny was made bright with flowers and ribbons; every bit of furniture in the house was polished, every saucepan lid scoured. Uncle Leth came home early from the bank, loaded with delicacies for Phœbe. Yes; everything was for Phœbe.

Clean linen on every bed, a fire in every room, her own chair here in this corner, on the table the books she loved, the piano open, with her favourite songs ready, her desk looking like new, with fresh ink and pens and paper—everywhere spiritual signs of love. "Oh mamma, mamma!" sighed Fanny again and again, and, clasped in each other's arms, the mother and daughter wept happy tears, and kissed and laughed, and then broke into tears again. "But we must be patient, darling," said Aunt Leth. "See what Fred says in this telegram—'It cannot be to-day. There are formalities to be gone through. I have seen Phœbe. She knows something, but not all. I feared that the shock would be too great. They say in the prison that she is an angel. She sends you her dearest love. I cannot come to you. Dick and I are very busy. God bless you all!' So you see, Fanny, we *must* be patient." Telegrams were flying to and fro all the day. 'Melia Jane was wild with joy. "Tom may come now when he likes," she said, "and I shall have a beautiful fortune to tell him." But Tom did not come to the house, nor did he send a message, of even a single word.

At eight o'clock in the evening Fred was alone in his rooms, waiting for Kiss, who had arranged to come for him. In company with Linton and a policeman in private clothes they were to follow Jeremiah and his mother when those two left their lodgings to meet the woman who had stolen the bracelet. They were not acquainted with the place of meeting, but it had been settled that the Pamfletts should be stealthily followed, and that steps should be taken to overhear what took place between them and the woman, and that afterward the three should be arrested. Garden could not form one of the party: he had too much to attend to.

It was destined, however, that this carefully-laid plan was not to be carried out. Everything else had succeeded, but this part of the programme of action was doomed to failure.

Kiss did not appear until half past eight, and when he entered the room Fred divined from the distress depicted in his face that something had gone wrong. His first words were:

"They have escaped us, Mr. Cornwall."

"Escaped you!" cried Fred, in great excitement.

"Yes. It is an unfortunate fact. I could beat my head against the wall. Whether their suspicions were aroused, or whether they had previously decided upon some course of action of which we were in ignorance, I cannot say; but they have disappeared, and so mysteriously that we don't know what to make of it."

"You, or one of you, saw them go, surely?"

"No, sir, we did not; and that is the strangest part of it. We all thought they were in their rooms; nothing had been heard of them for three or four hours, and we supposed they were asleep. At last Mrs. Linton came down from her cupboard, and said she did not know what to think of it, but it really seemed to her as if their rooms must be empty. Upon this the landlady said she would go up and ask them whether they required anything, and she did so; a minute afterward she called to us to come up, and we went. Their rooms *were* empty; the fiends had disappeared; and that they were gone for good was proved by their having taken certain things with them which, if they had only gone on an errand, they need not have touched."

"Perhaps they will come back," said Fred.

"Not they, sir," said Kiss, shaking his head. "They are a cunning pair, and they know what they are about. They have thrown us off the scent, Mr. Cornwall; there's no doubt in my mind about that."

Fred considered a moment. "You have the address of the woman they were to meet?"

"Yes, Mr. Cornwall."

"Give it to me. I will rattle there in a cab, and if I cannot learn anything about her, I will join you at No. 12."

"You will find it difficult to obtain any information of her, sir."

"Money will accomplish anything. I shall find out what I want to know."

Promising the cabman double fare if he drove at his fastest pace, Fred, in less than half an hour, arrived at the woman's lodgings. The landlady, as Kiss had foreseen, was disinclined to speak of her lodger, but a tip of half a sovereign and the promise of another loosened her tongue.

"I don't see, after all," said the landlady, "why I

shouldn't oblige you. She has left the rooms, and is not coming back."

Then she related how the woman had gone away in an open manner, saying that she was about to leave England, and did not intend to return. She was not going abroad alone; some friends were going with her. That was all.

"Can you tell me her name?" asked Fred.

The landlady replied that she did not know it.

That was the extent of the information Fred could obtain; and there was nothing for it but to go back to Surrey Street and ascertain whether anything had been heard of the Pamfletts. Nothing had been heard, and none of the neighbours could enlighten them. It was evident that they must have taken the greatest pains to get out of the neighbourhood unobserved.

When Garden was informed of what had taken place he was inexpressibly annoyed. It happened that Tom Barley was with him when Fred was giving an account of the occurrence.

"Ah, well," said Garden, presently, "we must make the best of it. We must put the police on their guard imme-

diately. The night trains to the Continent must be watched, and to-morrow we will offer a reward for their apprehension. I may manage to get an advertisement in some of the papers to-night. I have seen Mr. Quinlan, the wealthy owner of the stolen bracelet, and he has admitted that it was the genuine one which was stolen. He said he told the story to the police and the reporters in order that he should not be annoyed. 'I am rich enough to be able to afford such a loss,' he said. Wish we were—eh, Fred? I doubt whether I should have succeeded in prevailing upon him to let me pursue the case had I not informed him that in connection with it was a diabolical murder, for which an innocent girl had been condemned to death. 'The man who has the bracelet,' I said, 'is the man who committed the murder, and he and another laid an infernal plot to bring a beautiful girl to a shameful end.' This excited him, and he has given me *carte blanche* as to the expenses. So to-morrow we will offer a reward of five hundred pounds for the apprehension of Jeremiah Pamflett and his mother. It is good to know that their disappearance will not retard Miss Farebrother's release; everything is in training for that

happy event. Ill as I can afford it, I would give something out of my own pocket to know what takes place to-night between the murderers and thieves."

To some extent, the late editions of the newspapers on the following day supplied him and the country with the intelligence he desired to obtain:

"THE MURDER OF MISER FAREBROTHER.—THE MYSTERY OF THE DIAMOND BRACELET.—STRANGE REVELATIONS.

"The painful interest excited in the public mind by the trial of Miss Farebrother for the murder of her father, Miser Farebrother—a crime of which, in the teeth of the verdict, the young lady is now incontestably proved to be innocent—will be revived by the account we now publish of an outrage which took place last night, in an untenanted timber-yard near Nine Elms.

"These premises have been unoccupied for some considerable time. They are of large extent, and out of the way of regular traffic. Early this morning, just before sunrise, the policeman on the beat, passing the timber-yard, heard a sound as of a person moaning within. Entrance

to the yard is obtained through a pair of wooden gates, which are in a very dilapidated condition, being practically off their hinges. Indeed, by persons of the neighbourhood they are regarded as unsafe, and as likely soon to fall to pieces. The policeman, passing through these gates and going some distance into the yard—his course being guided by the faint moaning which had first arrested his attention—saw before him a woman in a frightful state. She was bleeding from a deep wound at the back of her neck, which must have been inflicted some hours previously, and was not sufficiently sensible to understand or reply to the questions addressed to her. Without delay the policeman procured assistance, and the woman was conveyed to St. Thomas's Hospital, where she was examined by the surgeon, who pronounced the wound she had received fatal, giving it as his opinion that she could not live twenty-four hours. Her pockets, which bore the appearance of having been rifled, contained nothing which afforded a clue to her name or address, nor were her clothes marked in a way which would lead to her identification. At ten o'clock this morning the woman recovered consciousness, and being made

sensible that death was approaching, requested the presence of a magistrate, to whom she made her dying deposition, which we give here word for word:

"'My name is Maria Baily. I was in the employ of a wealthy lady, Mrs. Quinlan. I was acquainted with a man who called himself Captain Ablewhite, but that is not his right name, and I don't know what is. He promised to marry me, and he prevailed upon me to steal a diamond bracelet of great value. It was worth forty or fifty thousand pounds. What I did with the bracelet after I took it from the jewel-safe of my mistress has been described in all the papers. We were stopping at the Langham Hotel. A man was waiting outside on the night I stole it, and I went and gave it to him, and then I ran away from my service to a room Captain Ablewhite had taken for me in Leman Street, Whitechapel. Captain Ablewhite told me that the man to whom I gave the bracelet was named Jeremiah Pamflett, and that his master, a rich money-lender, Miser Farebrother, was going to lend money on it. Three days after I stole the bracelet Captain Ablewhite took me away to Germany, and I remained with him some time."

"'He told me that Jeremiah Pamflett had cheated him; that he had promised to get four thousand pounds from Miser Farebrother for the bracelet, and that Jeremiah Pamflett had given him only two hundred. When the account was put into the newspapers that the bracelet I had stolen was of no value, and that the stones in it were false, Captain Ablewhite said it was not true, and that the bracelet I had given to Jeremiah Pamflett was the real one. Then Captain Ablewhite quarrelled with me, and deserted me. Not knowing what to do, I returned to London and found out Jeremiah Pamflett. I thought it would have been difficult to find him, but it was very easy, because his master had been murdered, and there was a great trial just over, in which Miser Farebrother's daughter had been found guilty of the murder of her father. Jeremiah Pamflett tried to escape from me; but I would not let him, and the end of it was that he confessed he had the bracelet in his possession; and he proposed that he, his mother, and I should all go away together to America, where he would be able to sell the diamonds, and where, changing our names, we could live in safety. We were to meet

last night at Nine Elms, and he and his mother were there when I arrived. So that we could talk together undisturbed, he took me to the place in which I was discovered, and there we had a quarrel. He wanted to give me ten pounds only, and said that he would send me more after he got safely away. I was in a great passion, and I asked him if Miser Farebrother had given him four thousand pounds for the bracelet—which money he said he had given to Captain Ablewhite—how it was that it was now in his possession. He said that was his business; and then we got to higher words, and I accused him of murdering Miser Farebrother so that he might rob him. Then Jeremiah Pamflett said: "Do you want to know the truth? I did kill him; and that is how I got the bracelet back again. But you shall not live to tell anybody else. I will kill you as I killed the miser!" As he said that, he plunged a knife into me, and I fell to the ground. The last words I heard were what his mother said: "She is dead; you have killed her. Let us get away as quick as possible." I do not remember anything more. I know I am dying. And I swear to God that I have told nothing but the truth!'

"Maria Baily signed this deposition, and then almost immediately became unconscious. The latest reports are to the effect that she cannot live through the night.

"Thus, in a strange and providential manner, a frightful injustice has been averted. It is singular that on the very day on which Jeremiah Pamflett committed this second murder, other evidence was obtained of the innocence of the young lady who, by an error of justice, was pronounced guilty of the murder of her father. The strongest evidence against the unfortunate and cruelly-wronged lady was supplied by a friend who had a deep affection for her. We refer to the evidence of Tom Barley, a policeman, who swore that he saw in the grounds of Parksides, at the time of the murder of the miser, a woman in a blue dress. Such a dress did Miss Farebrother wear when she went from her aunt's house in London, with the intention of asking her father for some assistance by which her aunt's family could be extricated from a temporary difficulty. It is now proved that Tom Barley is colour-blind, and that the woman he really saw had on a pink dress, such as Mrs. Pamflett,

Jeremiah Pamflett's mother, wore on that occasion. This strange discovery opens up a fruitful field of speculation. Other evidence is also forthcoming which indubitably establishes Miss Farebrother's innocence.

"There is now no reason to doubt that the story related by Mrs. Pamflett of the events of the night on which Miser Farebrother met his death was from first to last a cunningly invented fabrication. Part of this evidence is supplied by a gentleman who has been absent from England on business, and who testifies that Jeremiah Pamflett did not return to Miser Farebrother's London office until seven o'clock of the morning of the murder. It will be remembered that Jeremiah Pamflett swore that he returned at eleven o'clock on the previous night. He and his mother are at large: they could scarcely have had time and opportunity to effect their escape, as a watch was kept upon all the outgoing trains to the Continent last night. The police are on the alert, and it is to be hoped, in the interests of justice, that the criminals will soon be arrested and put upon their trial for their diabolical crimes."

CHAPTER XVII.

CHIEFLY CONCERNING FANNY.

Of all Phœbe's friends and well-wishers there was only one who did not openly share in the joy occasioned by her release. Congratulations poured in from all sides, even from strangers at a distance, whose letters of sympathy were delivered by smiling postmen at Aunt Leth's house at least half a dozen times a day. Phœbe's escape from her dread peril was, indeed, universally hailed with thankfulness and gratitude. Everybody was glad; the newspapers found in it a fruitful theme for grave disquisition; and Phœbe became a heroine in the best and sweetest sense of the term. As for Uncle Leth's day-dreams, as he walked to his bank in the morning and home from his day's labours in the evening, imagination could not excel them in delightfulness. Sunshine reigned in his home and in the hearts of all he loved.

The one friend who held aloof was Tom Barley. No person was more profoundly grateful than he at the proclamation of Phœbe's innocence; but he contracted a horror of himself as being the principal cause of his dear young mistress's sufferings. All appeals to him to soften this hard judgment were vain; he would scarcely listen to them, and when, against his will, he was compelled to do so, they had no effect upon him.

"It ain't a bit of good speaking to me," he said, moodily; "I don't deserve to live. And I shouldn't care to but for one thing."

That one thing was a fierce burning desire to bring Jeremiah Pamflett and his wicked mother to justice. For, strange to say, all the vigilance of the police had proved fruitless; the wretches were still at liberty, and not the slightest clue to their hiding-place had been discovered. A month had passed since Phœbe's release, and they had successfully evaded pursuit. It was believed by some that they had escaped from the country; but Tom Barley held a different opinion. He was still in the force—a capable, faithful public servant, zealous and judicious in the per-

formance of his duties, and regarded with esteem by his superiors; but a blight had fallen upon his life—a blight which he felt would not be removed until, through him, and through him alone, justice was satisfied. This idea grew into a kind of disease in him. It seemed as if he could exist without sleep. When not on duty he was indefatigable in hunting up clues, in making secret inquiries, in keeping watch in out-of-the-way places for the monsters of iniquity at whose door a double murder lay. He took no person into his confidence; he would accept no assistance; and he devoted every spare minute to the design upon which he had set his heart. His friends did not relinquish their efforts to woo him to a more peaceful and better frame of mind. Accompanied by Fred Cornwall, Phœbe went to him, and begged him not to torment himself with self-reproach. He listened to her in silence, with head bent down.

"Will you not speak to me, Tom?" she asked, imploringly.

"What can I say?" was his humble response. "How can I hope that you will ever forgive me?"

"But there is nothing to forgive, Tom," she said, sweetly, holding out her hand.

"It is like you to say so," he replied, "and it makes it all the worse for me."

"I never knew you to be unkind to me before, Tom," she said.

He turned away from her, and would not accept her hand. Fred Cornwall followed him, and said,

"You should not make her suffer, Tom; you are inflicting great pain upon the sweetest lady in the world."

"She is that, sir," said Tom, "and more. If I could die at her feet to save her a minute's pain I'd be glad to do it. Look here, sir; when I bring two devils to justice I'll ask her to forgive me; but not till then!"

'Melia Jane tried her arts upon him, and even waylaid him one night in a quiet corner, with a pack of cards in her hands, with which she begged to be allowed to tell his fortune; but he was adamant. Nevertheless, his friends would not desert him.

"He is too good a fellow to be lost sight of," said Fred Cornwall; "we'll win him back to us yet."

There was a bright future before Fred and his dear girl. Miser Farebrother had died without a will, and Phœbe came into possession of the property he left behind him. Investigation proved that it had been tampered with by Jeremiah Pamflett, but a competence was saved from the wreck. The greatest happiness Phœbe derived from this was that it enabled her to assist Aunt and Uncle Leth out of their difficulties. Happy were the evenings spent in the old home in Camden Town. Affairs were prospering with Fred Cornwall in the exercise of his profession. Events had brought his name into prominence, and briefs were flowing in. In a great measure he had Dick Garden to thank for this better turn in his fortunes. This astute young fellow would not take all the credit to himself of setting justice right; he made it public that it was due equally to his friend Fred, and both of them were on the high-road to fame. Fred seldom made his appearance in Aunt Leth's house without Dick, who seemed to find therein some great attraction. The strange and solemn experiences of the last few weeks had made Fanny Leth-bridge quieter and less lively than of old; but occasionally

flashes of her pleasant, saucy humour peeped out, to the delight of all, and especially to the delight of Dick Garden, who generally contrived to obtain a seat next to her. It was too soon for teasing to commence, else Bob, who was suspected of having a second or third love affair on hand, might have ventured retaliation upon his sister, and, judging from what was stirring in Fanny's heart, he would assuredly have had the best of it. For the present, however, she was spared; the spirit of tender, grateful love which reigned in the happy home was too profound even for innocent jest. Doubtless, however, the time would come when the merry equilibrium would be restored.

"Fred," said Dick Garden, as they were walking home one night from the Lethbridges', "when are you and Miss Farebrother going to get married?"

"Not settled yet," replied Fred; "nothing said about it. We must let some nine or ten months pass, I suppose."

"About this time next year, perhaps?"

"Yes; or a little earlier if I can bring it about. Thinking of anything particular, Dick?"

"Yes, old fellow."

"In connection with our wedding?"

"Well—partly."

"With weddings generally, then?"

"Not generally, Fred, specifically. Of course a fellow doesn't know anything yet."

"Of course not," said Fred, smiling. "Shall I guess a name?

"Try."

"Fanny?"

"Yes, Fanny," said Dick Garden, and then there was a little pause. "Fred, you have known them a long time?"

"I have."

"Good people."

"The best, the sweetest, the most faithful and devoted. Would to Heaven the world was filled with such!"

"I am with you there. But what I want to ask you is about Miss Lethbridge."

"Fanny? Yes."

"I don't wish you to betray family secrets, old fellow; but she is such a lovely girl—"

"She is."

"With so beautiful a nature that she could not fail to have attracted—you know what I mean, Fred; I am putting it rather lamely."

"An attachment?"

"Yes; but *you* put it somewhat coarsely."

"Didn't mean to, Dick. Quite right that you should be sensitive. Attracted? Rather! A dozen at least have sighed for her, and sighed in vain."

"Why?"

"Not the right ones, Dick. If there is one quality above another which distinguishes Fanny it is genuineness. A more genuine girl doesn't breathe. Dick, to be admitted upon terms of intimacy with that family is a privilege."

"I esteem it such. Not the right ones, Fred? Of course that must be the reason."

"It is. Where she gives her hand she will give her heart. They go together—both or none."

"Do you think—that is, have you any sort of idea—that she has met the right one at last?"

"Seriously, Dick? In perfect faith and honour?"

"Seriously, Fred. In perfect faith and honour."

"Dick, old boy," said Fred, earnestly, "I *have* a sort of idea that she has."

"You are a shrewd fellow, Fred—you have a trick of observation. You know what I mean?"

"I do, Dick."

"Well, then, good luck to us!"

The month was November; a fog was gathering; a light mist was dissolving, and falling cold and chill; but Dick Garden was glowing from within. As he was buttoning his coat a man brushed past them, and Fred caught a glimpse of his face.

"A moment, Dick," he said, hurriedly, "that is Tom Barley. I must have a word with him."

He hastened after Tom, and accosted him.

"It *is* you, Tom. Have you any news?"

"None, sir—that is, none that I can speak of. Don't stop me, please; I haven't a minute to spare." These words came straggling from Tom's lips, and in his anxiety he seemed to be hardly aware of what he was saying.

"Am I mistaken in the idea that you have heard something?" asked Fred.

"No, sir, you are not mistaken. I am on their track."

"As you have been before, Tom?"

"That's true, sir," said Tom, with a sigh; "as I have been before."

"Can I assist you?"

"No, sir; nor any one. What I do I'll do single-handed." He wrenched himself free. "Good-night, sir."

"Only another word, Tom. Have you any message for Miss Phœbe? She told me, if I met you, to give you her love."

"Did she, sir? She's an angel of goodness. Any message, sir? Yes, this—if I don't live to accomplish what I've set my life upon, if I don't live to ask her forgiveness myself, to think of me kindly sometimes as a man who would gladly have died for her!"

He darted away, and was lost in the mist. Fred gazed thoughtfully after him, and then he rejoined Garden.

"There goes an honest, suffering man," he said; "thorough to the backbone. He has inflicted a martyr-

dom upon himself, and is following a will-o'-the-wisp."

But the events of the next few hours were destined to prove that Fred Cornwall was in error.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LIFE-AND-DEATH STRUGGLE.

It was an hour past midnight, and the fog had deepened so that a man could scarcely see a yard before him. On the North Finchley Road it lay particularly thick, and the sky and surrounding space seemed to be blotted out—as they certainly were from two wayfarers who plodded their way slowly onward through the darkness. They were a man and a woman, who, although they were wrapped in gloom, cast apprehensive glances on all sides, and frequently stopped to listen for sounds of footsteps.

"Jeremiah, my love," said the woman, shivering, "why did you insist upon our leaving our nice warm quarters on such a night? It will be the death of me."

"*I'll* be the death of you," growled the man, "if you call me by my name! Mind that, you old fool!"

"Don't speak to me so hard!" implored the woman;

"no one can hear us. The night ain't fit for a dog to be out in it."

"That's the reason we're out in it," said Jeremiah, with a curse. "Hold your row, if you don't want me to do you a mischief!"

"Oh!" murmured Mrs. Pamflett, "that you should say such things to me after all I've done for you!"

"After all you've done for me! Yes, you *have* done for me! If it hadn't been for you dragging at my heels I should have been out of this infernal scrape weeks ago. You're a nice mother, you are! What's the use of such as you, I'd like to know?"

They were so well disguised that it would have been difficult even for those best acquainted with them to identify them; hence Jeremiah's caution to his mother as to being careful with her speech was not unnecessary. Nevertheless, he presently spoke again, either because he deemed that the darkness by which they were surrounded afforded them sufficient security or because he dreaded the terrors of silence.

"Why did I insist upon our leaving our nice warm quarters? You want me to tell you that, do you?"

"Yes," she whined. "We were safe there—we were safe there!"

"We were not! Had we remained we should have been nabbed by this time, and then what chance would have been left for us? The landlord warned me; he told me we were being hunted down, and that there was danger in our keeping in our hiding-place another night."

"Who has hunted us down—who, my love?"

"Yah! keep your love to yourself; I'm sick of it. Who? Ah, I should like to know, and have him here! There'd be no more hunting down for him, I promise!"

"The landlord was frightened; he wanted to get rid of us."

"Frightened? Perhaps he was; but he would not have been in a hurry to get rid of such good customers without good cause. He's had a matter of a hundred pounds already out of me, and he knew I had enough left to go on with a pretty long time yet. But I kept the diamond bracelet from him, with all his cunning. He wormed and

wormed, but he never got out of me that I had it safe about me. I was his match there. Let's have a look at it, mother. It does one's heart good. It's the only thing that keeps me up."

He crouched down by the side of the hedge and drew forth a dark lantern, which he lighted. Then he rose, and looked about him, projecting the light into dark spaces around to make sure that no person was near. He saw nothing, heard nothing. Down he crouched again, and from an inner pocket pulled out a jewel-case, which he opened.

"Look at them, mother—how they glitter and shine! Ah, you beauties, there's nothing false about you! If we were safe in a foreign country, or in America—I prefer America, mother; looking for us there would be like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay—if we were safe there, with this in our pockets, we could live a long life of pleasure and comfort. I should know how to dispose of the stones one by one, secretly, secretly! It's the land for diamonds. Then I could have my fling."

Neither of the pair saw or had any suspicion of the

shadow that was creeping through thicker shadows than itself, closer, closer, closer. Neither of them saw, or had any suspicion of, the hand of doom coming nearer, nearer, nearer, to strike terror to their guilty souls.

"Here, take a pull at this, mother," said Jeremiah, handing her a bottle.

"It warms me, it warms me!" murmured Mrs. Pamflett.

"Don't empty the bottle," cried Jeremiah, snatching it from her. "You're a selfish cat!"

"What did the landlord tell you, Jeremiah, about our being hunted down?"

"There's been a man making inquiries about the lodgers, and offering money to find out things. He didn't know who he was, but it looked suspicious, and we were safer out of the house than in it. Take another look at the beauties, mother, before I put them away."

Closer, closer, closer crept the shadow. Closer, closer, closer came the hand of doom.

"Do you think we *shall* get safe away?" whispered Mrs. Pamflett, as Jeremiah crouched, gloating over the diamonds.

"Do I think it?—I'm sure of it! The police have been

too long off the scent for them to get on to it again. All we've got to do is to be cunning, cunning—"

"Jeremiah!" screamed Mrs. Pamflett.

The shadow loomed over them, fell upon them, and seized them and the diamond bracelet. In a moment Jeremiah had wrested it back again, and three human beings were engaged in a deadly struggle.

"I arrest you," cried Tom Barley, "for the murder of Miser Farebrother and Maria Baily!"

The contest was unequal. Strong as Tom Barley was, Jeremiah and his mother had the strength of desperation, and they succeeded in flinging him off. But he fell on them again, and his cries for help rang loud through the night.

"It's you, Tom Barley, is it?" muttered Jeremiah, as the struggle was proceeding. "It's you that's been hunting us down, is it?"

"Yes, it's me," said Tom Barley, getting his mouth free—Mrs. Pamflett was endeavouring to stifle his cries with her hand—"and as God is your judge you're as good as dead!"

"Hold on to him, mother, a moment," said Jeremiah;

"fix your teeth in him! Say your prayers, Tom Barley; it's you that's as good as dead!"

"Ah!" screamed Tom, and he dropped.

Jeremiah had succeeded in plucking a knife from his pocket, and, opening it, had plunged it into Tom. He had aimed at the honest fellow's heart, but he had missed, and the knife had gone through the upper part of the right arm, cutting it cruelly to the bone. It was this that had caused Tom to let go his hold upon them. They took advantage of the release, and fled through the darkness. But in a moment Tom was on his feet again, and pursuing them, the blood flowing fast from the wound. He did not feel the pain of it; all that he bemoaned was that his arm was useless and that his voice was growing weak. Before fifty yards were traversed he had seized them again.

"Curse it!" cried Jeremiah, "I have lost my knife."

"That's my luck," muttered Tom, clinging to them.

"Help! help!"

They beat him frightfully about the head, and he flung it feebly this way and that in the endeavour to escape the cruel blows; but he did not loose his hold of them again.

In the blind and dreadful struggle they stumbled wildly about, and suddenly they fell crashing down over an embankment. And still Tom Barley, feeling now that life was ebbing from him, held desperately on to them, and still his cries floated on the air. To the frightful sounds of this contest another was added the moment they reached the bottom of the embankment. They had fallen upon a railway track, and a train was approaching. Two huge fierce eyes glared luridly in the fog. Tom's voice grew fainter and fainter, but he never relaxed his hold of the murderers.

"Help! help! help! I have caught the murderers! Help! help! help!"

The clatter of the approaching train almost, but not quite, drowned his appeals. They fell vaguely upon the ears of the engine-driver, and he instantly slackened steam. But the huge lurid eyes were now very close upon the struggling forms.

"Damn you!" screamed Jeremiah, "will you let go?"

"No," said Tom, through his clenched teeth, "not till I'm dead! And then I won't!"

"Then there's an end of you!" cried Jeremiah, and by a determined and powerful effort he succeeded in throwing the lower portion of Tom's body across the rails. Fortunately Tom's head was off the line, and his left arm was wound tightly round Jeremiah's neck. The train passed over Tom's foot, and cut it clean away, but Tom, although he had swooned, held on like grim death, and did not even feel Jeremiah's teeth fixed in his arm. In this position they were found a moment or two afterward, when the train was stopped, and it was with great difficulty that the engine-driver and passengers could part him who lived from him who looked like dead.

The news ran through the length and breadth of the kingdom the next morning, and telegraph wires flashed it all over the world. Tom Barley did not wake to find himself famous, for the reason that for several weeks he was in delirium, and very, very near to death. But none the less was he made famous and dubbed a hero of heroes for the wondrous battle he had fought. Newspapers and magazines sang his praises, and poets deified him. The days of Homer died not in Homer's verse. We have as glorious

heroes to-day as have been handed down, immortalized from those by-gone times. We have hearts as valiant, and souls as noble, and love as sweet and pure, in this age which is dubbed commercial and prosaic; and though Tom Barley has a wooden leg, he is worthy to shake hands with Achilles. No such desire possesses him, or possessed him when he saw Phœbe sitting by his bedside in the hospital.

"You are getting strong again, Tom?"

"Yes, Miss Phœbe; thank God! Is everybody well?"

"Everybody, Tom."

"Your aunt and uncle, and Miss Fanny and Master Robert?"

"They are all well, Tom. They send their love, and will come and see you when they are allowed."

"They are very good. And Mr. Cornwall, Miss Phœbe —he is well, I hope?"

"Quite well, Tom. He is below, waiting for me."

"I am glad to hear it, Miss Phœbe. But perhaps I am making a mistake."

"In what, Tom?"

"In calling you Miss Phœbe."

"No, Tom." She held up her left hand.

"If I dared to ask a favour?"

"You may dare to ask anything, Tom."

"That I may be allowed to come to the wedding?"

"Indeed, Tom, I think that is what we are waiting for. We could not be happy without you."

"I can't thank you now, Miss Phœbe," said Tom, tears gathering in his eyes. "I will when I'm stronger. There is another thing."

"Yes, Tom?"

"Say that you forgive me!"

"Ah, Tom!"

"It will make me happy, Miss Phœbe."

"Only because you have that foolish idea in your head—Tom, I forgive you!"

She stooped and kissed him, as she had kissed him on the morning he brought her from Parksides and gave her into the care of her good Aunt Leth.

"I am truly grateful," murmured Tom, in a choking voice, as he turned his face to the wall.

CHAPTER XIX.

OFF FOR THE HONEY-MOON.

"WELCOME the coming, speed the parting, guest." Therefore shall our last chapter be short.

In the autumn of the following year a quiet wedding-party assembled after church in Aunt Leth's house. To be exact, it was a double wedding-party—Phœbe and Fred, Fanny and Dick. It was a gathering of friends, some of whom have played their parts in this story, and whom, I hope, we have grown to love. The Lethbridge family, of course—I cannot stop to relate the wonderful day-dream Uncle Leth had on that morning—and Mr. and Mrs. Linton and Kiss, and 'Melia Jane and Tom Barley; those were the principal ones. There were also connections of Fred Cornwall and Dick Garden, all amiable, pleasant persons, if one could judge from their faces. Tom Barley had just whispered something to 'Melia Jane, and her answer was,

"Lor', Tom; I'm ashamed to think of it!"

"Then you won't," whispered Tom.

"Yes, I will," replied 'Melia Jane, very quickly. "It was the way the fortune came out last night. But to think of it, Tom! to think of it!"

And to the surprise of all, not one of whom had heard a word of what had passed, 'Melia Jane threw her apron over her head, where it hung down like a bridal veil. She had put on the apron when she came from the church into the house, to wait upon the company. It was a smarter apron than usual, and she was proud of it; and, as you see, she put it to good use—to hide her blushes.

The two young couples will set up house-keeping on the day they return from their honey-moon tour. The houses are taken, and Aunt Leth will be very busy while they are away setting everything in order for her dear ones. Tom Barley will live with Phœbe and Fred as gardener—that is, unless he and 'Melia Jane decide to set up a separate establishment of their own. Tom is in a position to do this. He has received the five hundred pounds offered as a reward for the recovery of the diamond bracelet, and at

least another five hundred subscribed by an admiring public for his gallant conduct.

"How do you do, Mrs. Cornwall?" whispered Fanny to Phœbe.

"How do you do, Mrs. Garden?" whispered Phœbe to Fanny.

Then they stepped aside and kissed and embraced, with faces like an April day—one of the brightest and most beautiful of April days.

Their last kisses, their last embraces, are for Aunt Leth. She stands at the door gazing after the carriages with sweet and wistful eyes. And so the young people commence their happy wedded life.

THE END